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## DRAMATISTS OF THE XVIIth CENTURY

1. HANS SACHS.

2. ARIOSTO.

3. CERVANTES.

4. ETIENNE.

5. MARLOWE.

6. GREENE.

*The dramatists of five nations are here depicted. It was a happy thought to oppose Hans Sachs (1), with the furrowed but honest face of the sturdy craftsman (shoemaker), to the jovial poet and man of the world, Ariosto (2); the first honestly testing, conscientiously thinking, while laboring over his work, no matter whether he was writing "earnest tragedy," "lovely comedy," "farces," "battle-harangues" or "carnival plays;" the other, the aristocratic cinquecento poet, accustomed to success from court to court, holding his book before him like a trophæe. He is not represented here as the poet of the "Orlando Furioso," but as the founder of the "Commedia Erudita." Cervantes (3), a brilliant Spanish chivalresque character-figure, hand on hilt of his Toledo blade, here also characterizes, not the writer of Don Quixote, but rather the creator of the dramas "El trato de Argel and Numantia." Close beside him stands one of the French "Pleiades," Etienne Jodelle (4), while to the rear Marlowe (5) and Greene (6), the representatives of the English drama and precursors of Shakespeare, occupy the picture.*

*DRAMATISTS OF THE XVIIth CENTURY*

*After an original painting by Ad. Hynais*



The drama : its history, literature  
and influence on civilization

# French Drama

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## Prologue



**F**ROM time immemorial France has been a favorite home of the drama; for how many centuries the literary historian is puzzled to say. French literature can hardly be traced further back than the eleventh century, nor can examples of the language be found earlier than the ninth. Yet there is evidence of street exhibitions in Paris, akin to the drama, long before.

They must have been understood by the people, and, perhaps, were relics of old Latin plays.





## PROLOGUE

IN France, as in other parts of Europe, in the Middle Ages the clergy tried by dramatic illustrations to impress on the minds of the illiterate people the historic facts of Christianity. These mysteries and miracle plays, becoming popular, passed from the churches to scaffolds in the streets and fields, from the clergy to troupes of lay actors. One of these companies—the Brethren of the Passion—obtained in 1402 royal permission to fit up a hall for performances—the first theatre in Paris. A great expansion of the drama followed, and the stage, with its treatment of life, became the literary school of the public.

A new age dawned in the reign of Francis I.—the glorious period of the Renaissance, when the modern world awoke to behold and admire the beauties of classical antiquity. Jodelle and Garnier, drawing their inspiration from Latin authors rather than the Greek originals, moulded the primitive type of French classic tragedy. All did not submit slavishly to the classical yoke. The most prominent playwright, Alexander Hardy, had visited Spain, and in his numerous dramas followed the example of Lope de Vega in making everything depend on rapid action.

## PROLOGUE

The great Cardinal Richelieu wished to rule in literature as well as in affairs of State. His permanent contribution to this department was the founding of the Academy which has guided with general discretion the development of French genius. The Academy, alleging the authority of Aristotle, established the canons of the drama which prevailed in the French theatre for two centuries. Their central principle is the maintenance of the so-called unities of time, place and action, even to a manifestly absurd degree. But the greatest tragic poet of France, Pierre Corneille submitted only partially and reluctantly, and in fact won his supremacy by the *Cid*, acclaimed by Paris, though censured by the Academy for its violation of the rules. Other masterpieces of historical portraiture and moral grandeur established his reputation. His principal comic effort, *Le Menteur*, achieved equal success.

In the meantime Racine, thirty years younger, improved on his predecessor's method, and, better disposed to meet the public demand, became his ungrateful rival. Louis XIV. extended favor to both in their prime, but coldly withdrew it in their age. Racine's tragedies gave prominence to the

## PROLOGUE

passion of love. His heroes are noted for their gracious glory, his heroines for the pleasing variety of their affection. His poetry is marked by the excellence of its versification. His best works are pronounced by French critics the perfection of their drama. His *Les Plaideurs*, which is given in full in this work, is the most skillful modern adaptation of an idea taken from Aristophanes.

In the Augustan age of Louis XIV. Molière is the bright luminary of comedy. Actor, manager and playwright, he won the favor of both king and people, yet was excluded from the Academy and proscribed by the Church. His productions cover the entire range of social comedy, and extend beyond to sprightly farces, brilliant ballets and splendid operas. The faults and foibles of contemporary society are wittily ridiculed in plays which still hold the stage. The highest reach of his genius is in the scathing exposure of hypocrisy in *Tartuffe*. Our record in this volume closes with the premature death of this genuine and genial master of mirth.

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## French Drama.

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### I.

#### *France Inherits Roman Civilization.*

France owes its modern name to a German tribe which in the fifth Christian century conquered the land formerly named Gallia or Gaul. The Franks, following the example of the Gauls, whom they had subdued, accepted much of the ancient Roman civilization. Just as readily they were baptized into the Christian religion at the command of their king, Clovis. They even abandoned their own language and adopted the Latin dialect which they found prevailing in their new abode. The official and literary language long remained classical, while the popular speech widely diverged from that standard.

It is impossible to determine at what period the French language which was thus evolved became entirely distinct from its Latin original. The oldest written record of it is the oaths sworn to a treaty at Strasburg, A. D. 842, by Louis the German and Charles the Bald and their respective armies. The next example of the new language which was struggling to light is a

short poem on St. Eulalia, preserved in a manuscript of the tenth century.

But even before the earlier date there are notices of something akin to the drama in France. It is recorded that bands of actors and jocalatores, or jugglers, gave performances in the streets of Paris. Classical tragedy and comedy were unknown except in the few monasteries which cherished the remains of Latin literature. The drama, on account of its pagan origin and its strong impress of pagan religion and morality, had been sternly suppressed by the Christian Church. Yet, in its humbler forms, relics and traditions of this attractive amusement lingered among the people. There were, indeed, some strolling performers, who wore a sort of ecclesiastical dress and sang ballads or recited dialogues relating to acts of the saints. Though they sought approval of their superiors as promoting knowledge of the true religion, they often relaxed in such efforts and indulged in unseemly practices. Charles the Great, recognizing their evil tendency, issued a prohibitory decree, A. D. 789. Henceforth they disappear from the page of history for centuries. Yet we must not forget Taillefer, who rode foremost into the fight at Hastings in 1066, singing his songs of Roland and Charlemagne while he tossed his sword in the air and caught it again. Professional actors like him were often attached to the train of barons and knights.

#### Church Plays.

In a former volume the remarkable fact that the revival of the drama in modern Europe was due to the

Christian Church has been abundantly proved and illustrated. At first, certain parts of the church ritual were expanded in action, and especially at the great religious festivals of Christmas and Easter attempts were made to exhibit vividly before the faithful what the service was intended to commemorate. The Wise Men from the East, who had been guided by a miraculous star, worshipped and presented their gifts before the cradle of the Divine babe; the Virgin Mother was represented by a girl with a child in her arms; the Resurrection was suggested by a priest rising from a mimic sepulchre. Later the action was extended, and dialogues were added. These were, of course, in Latin, the universal language of the Church. Gradually scenes from other Scripture stories were combined with those strictly belonging to the service. These church dramas may have been inartistic, but they were characterized by strict simplicity and earnest devotion.

After a time, as has already been shown, these or similar miracle-plays were performed outside of the churches, in the streets of towns or in the fields, at fairs or places of public resort. The actors were priests or monks, and the performance was still religious, including legends of the saints, as well as Scripture histories. At times, perhaps, a touch of nature was added to gratify the rabble who flocked to the show.

### *Minstrels and Jongleurs.*

The minstrel was one of the most picturesque figures of mediæval life. He seems to have inherited some.

features of the Roman histrions and others of the bards of Gaul and Germany. In the summer, arrayed in particolored costume, and with a harp or viol across his shoulders, he ambled on a gaily-caparisoned mule from town to town and from castle to castle. His song was introduced and followed by feats of agility and legerdemain, and was accompanied with such crude music as he could command. His themes were the miracles of the saints, the stories of Scripture, or perhaps more frequently, the legends of later heroes. At the country fairs and in the market places he gathered an appreciative crowd, and in the feudal castles, whose monotony, except in actual warfare, was broken only by tournaments, he was the most welcome. High and low, old and young, glowed with enthusiasm as he sang of the prowess of Christian warriors. Lords and ladies took delight in rewarding him with substantial gifts. Kings and princes attached the most skillful of his class to their retinue. Even bishops and abbesses sought to retain their services permanently.

#### **Trouvères and Troubadours.**

Minstrelsy may be deemed as the mother of a literature which paved the way for a revival of the drama. The accents of these versatile gleemen aroused the Muses from their protracted sleep. In nearly all parts of what is now known as France the "gay science" found more or less gifted votaries among the well-born cultured. The trouvères and troubadours successively took up the lyre, the former to the north of the Loire,

and the latter under the softer skies of the south, where the *Langue d'Oc*, a tongue resembling Italian rather than French, was spoken. Uninfluenced by ancient models, but not free, especially after the first crusade, from a tinge of Oriental imagery and refinement, the consequent efflorescence of poetry, viewed as a whole, presents a striking picture of the thought and sentiment of the age which produced it, the age when chivalry was gilding the darker features of feudalism and the misery it wrought.

That the merits of minstrel literature obtained a wide acknowledgment there can be no doubt. Once heard, a passage of noble poetry, with or without the aid of music, could not be forgotten. "Many of your love verses to me," writes H  lo  ise to Abelard, "were so beautiful in their language and melody that your name was incessantly in the mouths of all, and even the most illiterate were charmed. You caused women to envy me. Every tongue spoke of your H  lo  ise; every street and every house resounded with my name." In other words, the minstrels were more sought after and recompensed than ever, and their social status advanced. Making Paris their headquarters, those of the north formed themselves into a corporation, acquired exclusive privileges, received permission to style their chief *Roi*, and became so opulent that two members of the fraternity alone could afford to build a church and a hospital in the street they inhabited. While this may seem incredible, it should be remembered that the purses which the *jongleurs* carried in their belts as a part of their equipment were always well filled at the mansions of



the rich, where they were lavishly entertained, even the poor also contributing freely of their means.

### Decline of Minstrelsy.

The success and popularity of these jongleurs attracted unworthy followers and imitators. These low fellows, unable to obtain entrance to courts and baronial halls, donned grotesque dresses, stationed themselves in market-place or village green and supplemented their verses with coarse buffoonery, feats of legerdemain, tricks with monkeys, and doggerel appealing to a vitiated taste. It was to no purpose that Philip Augustus and Saint Louis banished them from the country, or that the poets, finding the honored names of *trouvère* and *troubadour* trailed through the dirt, angrily denounced them as bastards, and ceased to provide them with verse. The contempt in which they came to be held is clearly shown by the fact that *jonglerie* was employed as a term for anything base, and a decree was issued condemning them to imprisonment as rogues and vagabonds.

### Church Drama.

Meanwhile the place of the Latin prose play in the festivals of the Church was now occupied by a Mystery in French verse. No pains seem to have been spared to heighten the attractiveness of the latter in its new home. Characterized in itself by a simple dignity befitting the treatment of such themes, it was acted with

all the pomp and circumstance associated with Roman Catholic worship; and nowhere shall we find a grander or more impressive spectacle than a Mystery of the Passion, as performed in one of these grand old Gothic piles. Banners hung above the fretted arches; the odor of incense filled the air; tapers shone brightly in the dim light from storied and diversely-colored windows; elaborate processions wound their way through the aisles to the strains of solemn music; the figures of the priest-players stood out in clear relief against the splendor of the altar, as, facing thousands of rapt spectators, they gravely declaimed, with appropriate gestures, the dialogue intended to set forth the events which led up to the Crucifixion.

### Street Performances.

So potent a means of entertaining the masses could not long be kept within the pale of the sanctuary, where, to use a simile from Goethe, it was like an oak in a vase of porcelain. It disengaged itself from direct ecclesiastical influence, returned to the market-place, and became an independent institution. Mysteries and Miracles—the latter dealing with the Virgin and saints—were played by guilds and companies expressly organized for the purpose, and no popular festivity was deemed complete without one or more of these instructive entertainments. They were given on scaffolds in the streets, with the actors in more or less archaic costume, with an organ at the back to accompany a chorus of angels, and also with some attempt to indicate

the place of the different actions. Occasionally farce was introduced into the most serious scenes. Especially comic was the figure of the devil, who, appearing on the stage as he was popularly supposed to be—a deformed and hairy sprite, with horns, dragon's wings, long tail and cloven feet—was subjected to the greatest cruelties and indignities. Nothing was then deemed too cruel for the presumed author of all the ills and annoyances experienced by mankind. Roars of laughter filled the air when holy men spat in his face, when liberties were taken with his tail, when a stalwart anchorite brought him to the dust with a well-directed blow, and, above all, when a courageous saint seized him by the nose with red-hot pincers.

#### *The Brethren of the Passion.*

One of the companies formed to represent these plays was destined to eclipse all others. In 1398, a number of young artisans devised and appeared in a new *Mystère de la Passion*. Soon afterward, at the instance of wealthy and pious citizens, they erected a hall at a village near Paris, in order to continue their performances without fear of being interrupted by bad weather; but the authorities put their veto upon the project. Four years later, the Brethren of the Passion, as the artisans were called, appealed against this decree to Charles VI, who, having seen their Mystery performed, issued orders permitting them to do as they pleased.

North of the Seine, hard by the Porte St. Denis, an Hôpital de la Trinité had been built by two foster-

brothers for the benefit of travellers arriving after the time for admission to the city proper. Here the Brethren took up their quarters; and here, in a large salon, duly fitted up, they appeared in the *Mystery of the Passion* and other sacred dramas on Sundays and during certain festivals of the Church.

### The First Paris Playhouse.

Thus was established the first of Parisian theatres, its performances serving as the models on which similar entertainments were afterward given throughout the country. About mid-day, having paid two sous for admission, the spectator passed into a hall sixty-three feet by eighteen in size, and on the level of the street. There were no seats, the audience, which consisted in the main of sober citizens and their children, with a sprinkling of the clergy, having only the pit to stand in. The stage was divided by floors into three sections, each with a painting at the back. The highest represented Paradise, the next a spot in the Holy Land, and the third the infernal regions. In the first, which reached the roof, a man of severe and venerable aspect, enthroned in a chair, impersonated the Creator, the Virtues standing by in picturesque attitudes. Most of the action, of course, passed in the second stage, whither angels and devils respectively descended or mounted as their presence on earth was required. It was through the mouth of a dragon emitting fire from its eyes and nostrils that the devil and his myrmidons came on and vanished. Some of the scenes were

chanted to music, usually from an organ. The players, when not acting, sat in a semi-cirele behind those who were. Judged by isolated passages, the play might be deemed grotesque, indecent, and even irreverent, yet it was undoubtedly in full accord with the religious notions of the time.

### *The Basochians and Enfants Sans Souci.*

The success of the Mystery speedily led to the introduction of a lighter and purely secular drama. Foremost among the guilds in Paris at this time was that of the Clercs de la Basoche, minor officials of the city courts. Established in the thirteenth century by Philippe le Bel, this guild took an important part in the administration of the law, attained to the dignity of a royaume, and was reviewed once a year by the reigning monarch. Eager to add to their renown by means of dramatic performances on their fête days, the Basochians now introduced forms of plays which have already been described—the *Moralité*, the figures in which are chiefly personifications of sentiments and abstract ideas, and the *Farce*, which may be roughly described as a resuscitation of the homely fable in dramatic form. The farces were the first French writings in which the mirror of the drama was held up to everyday life and character. Henpecked husbands, imperious wives, exasperating mothers-in-law, good-for-nothing monks, lip-valorous soldiers, and other personages were connected with more or less whimsical adventures, the dialogue being often lighted up by flashes of

wit, by satires on some common foible, or pleasant-ries at the expense of the younger officials. Except at times of public rejoicing, when they played on a scaffold in the street, the theatre of the Basochians was the hall of the Palais de Justice, their stage, the great marble table on which were served the banquets formerly given by kings of France. But the Basochians were not long permitted to monopolize these new forms of the drama. The Enfants sans Souci, a band of educated and frolicsome youths, all of whom figured in the revels of the court, and who, wearing on their heads a sort of hood, garnished on each side with an ass's ear, annually made a formal entry into Paris under the leadership of their chief, the prince of Fools, began to represent in the Halles what they termed a Sottie, in substance a copy of the farce, but weaker in story, political in purpose, and keenly satirical in character. That it hit the taste of its hearers there can be no doubt; for the Basochians added Sotties to their repertory, while the Brethren of the Passion induced the Enfants sans Souci to play a piece at the Hôpital de la Trinité after each representation of the Mystery.

#### *Decline of Religious Drama.*

Notwithstanding the intermittent hostility of the Parlement, farce outlived the graver drama from which it sprang. For some time past the popularity of the Mysteries and Miracles had been steadily declining. They had been spun out until the representation of the shortest occupied several days, and the most pious



spectator must have found them wearisome. They had ceased to be in harmony with the temper of the age. The dawn of latter-day civilization had broadened into what seemed almost as the perfect day. The intellectual agitation induced by the events of the last hundred years—the revival of ancient literature, the overthrow of the Ptolemaic system, the downfall of the Moors in Spain, the discoveries of Iberian navigators, political changes and the partial liberation of the Church—had lifted the human mind out of the narrow ruts in which it had so long been content to move. New ideas began to hold sway; an ardent and restless spirit of inquiry was abroad in the land; opinions which seemed to be bound up with life itself were rejected or essentially altered. Unlike other mediæval institutions, chivalry not excepted, religion emerged with added strength from the ordeal; for while a vague skepticism may have found expression in the pages of Rabelais and Montaigne, among the nation at large the old child-like simplicity of faith gave way to a higher sense of the dignity and grandeur of Christianity.

The Renaissance also served to raise the standard of literary taste, inasmuch as, aided by the invention of printing, it was bringing imperishable monuments of ancient poetry and prose within the reach of all who could read. Under these circumstances the sacred drama, with its odd intermixture of the sublime and the grotesque, its crudeness of form and substance, rapidly lost the charm it had once possessed. Catholics and Huguenots united in denouncing it as likely to bring religion into contempt, and its defects in the way of

style were glaring enough to evoke a flood of ridicule. The Brethren of the Passion, so far from appreciating the necessity of reforming their entertainments, sought to compensate themselves for the coldness of the lettered playgoers by appealing more than ever to the unlettered—in other words, by giving increased prominence to satire and scandal. By this change of policy they simply accelerated their doom; and a few years later, the French religious drama, the oldest institution of the kind in western Europe, passed away with the state of society which permitted such things to exist.

### **Condemnation of Secular Drama.**

The great majority of the priesthood could not reconcile themselves to the purely secular drama, especially after they saw that a great revolution was in progress about them. Might not the theatre be employed to disseminate ideas more or less inimical to their doctrines and pretensions? Were they not really warming a viper in their bosom? The decree of 1548, abolishing the religious drama, did away with the only reason they had for dissembling their hostility to the farce—namely, a reluctance to throw discredit upon an institution which partly devoted itself to the service of Christianity. Henceforward the clergy were uncompromising opponents of theatrical amusement in any shape. They reprehended play-going as incompatible with true devotion, purity of life and sobriety of thought. They condemned the actor to a kind of social outlawry, declaring that, unless he

solemnly forswore his profession, he could not receive the holy communion or be entitled to Christian burial.

### *Influence of the Renaissance.*

The great unsealing of the waters, known as the Renaissance, had an immediate and decisive effect upon every form of creative thought, and upon the drama more than any other. In Italy, where the movement took its rise, tragedy and comedy of the ancient pattern, but often instinct with the spirit of religion and chivalry, were flourishing side by side with a farce indigenous to the soil. Italy enjoyed, at this time, all the authority which a nearly unequalled success in the arts of peace can confer. In painting and sculpture, poetry and prose, commerce and industry, she virtually gave laws to the world. France quickly fell under her influence; the classical drama came to be enthusiastically imitated in Paris, and the boast of Cardinal d'Amboise, "we shall be more Italian than Italy itself," was justified, at least as far as this artificial growth was concerned.

### *College Plays and the Pleiade.*

In France, as elsewhere, this revival was largely due to the study of ancient literature in the colleges. The speech-day programmes here had long included the performance of some new *sottie*—a custom not free from danger, as the scholars, not to be outdone in temerity by the incorrigible Basochians, indulged in satire at the

expense of the court itself. More than one decree was launched against them by the Parlement; and Francois I, finding that his blameless sister, Marguerite de Valois, had been represented at the collège de Navarre as a "furie," threw into prison as many of the authors and actors as he could lay hands upon. If the authorities apprehended a renewal of the annoyance they were soon reassured. Formerly avoided or discouraged, Greek and Latin learning was now in fashion with the merest striplings, and translations of classical plays took the place of farces in the collegiate entertainments. *Hecuba* and *Electra*, for instance, were rendered into French verse by Lazare de Baif, ambassador at Venice, for the collège de Coquerel, whither his natural son, Jean Antoine, was sent a few years afterward. Among the friends of the latter were Pierre de Ronsard, Étienne Jodelle, Dubellay, Rémi-Belleau, and Pontus de Tiard. Each of these youths had a genuine enthusiasm for classical lore; and eventually, in conjunction with their tutor, Dorat, they formed the project of enriching their native language by means of poetry in which ancient words, both Greek and Latin, should be introduced wherever practicable. The enterprise was truly quixotic; but there is no doubt that the "Pleiade," as the seven poets were collectively termed, exercised in many respects a salutary influence upon the literature of their time. Not the least characteristic product of the new school was a version by Ronsard of *Plutus*, executed for the collège de Coquerel in 1549. Each translation met with marked success; and Jodelle, who was intended for the profes-

sion of arms, but whose time appears to have been evenly divided between pleasure and the study of poetry and art, resolved to try the effect of some new plays upon the old lines.

### Jodelle.

In 1552, before Jodelle had completed his twenty-first year, his idea was realized under conditions as favorable as the want of trained actors and a good stage would permit. First came the tragedy of *Cléopâtre Captive*, represented in the quadrangle of the Hôtel de Rheims, the audience including Henri II, and the flower of his court. Jodelle himself impersonated the Egyptian queen, and among those who supported him were Jean de la Peruse, a dabbler in verse, and Remi-Belleau. Formed upon the Greek model, even to the extent of introducing a chorus, *Cléopâtre* depends upon narration to the all but complete exclusion of action, and in point of style may be described as an echo of that of Seneca. Its comparative novelty, however, blinded the spectators to its defects. Pasquier, who was present, tells us that the king presented the author with five hundred crowns from the royal purse, and before long, the performance was repeated in the presence of his Majesty at the collège de Boncourt, all the windows of which, like the court itself, were choked with spectators.

Not content with the laurels he had won as a tragic poet, Jodelle next produced a comedy under the title of *Eugène, ou La Rencontre*. It is a story of modern

French life, with a libertine abbé for the chief personage, and was acted with good success at the Hôtel de Rheims and the collège de Boncourt. Jodelle now found himself in a most enviable position. He was regarded on nearly all hands as a modern Sophocles. The king, in common with the duchesse de Savoie and other leaders of fashion, lavished favors upon him, and his fellow Pleiads, in a spirit which speaks for itself, and made the welkin ring with praises of his "happy courage" and its results. It is to be feared that on one occasion his friends did him more harm than good; for they organized a Bacchic procession in his honor, and the ceremony was sternly denounced by Huguenots and Catholics alike. The charge of irreverence, industriously repeated by jealous poetasters, went far to undermine his popularity. His next play, *Didon se Sacrifiant*, was received with studied coldness by most of the audience, although it is of higher value than *Cléopâtre*, and has at least one passage—the invocation to Venus—which deserves to live. Mortified by the rebuff, Jodelle ceased to write for the stage, and even under the pressure of poverty could not be induced to return to it. He died at an early age, his last poem being one in which he likened himself to Anaxagoras.

### The New Drama.

But Jodelle's work survived him. The accents of the dramatic muses continued to be heard in the court-yards of the colleges and at royal fêtes. Seneca's *Medea* and *Agamemnon* were successively reproduced



in French, the first by Jean de la Peruse, the poet already referred to, and the other by Charles Toutain. In order to forget a love-disappointment, Jacques Grevin, afterward physician to the duchesse de Savoie, wrote for his Alma Mater, the collège de Beauvais, two comedies, *La Trésorière* and *Les Esbahis*, and one tragedy, *La Mort de César*. For the serious drama he had no vocation; but his lighter pieces, the scene of which is laid in the old Place Maubert, a well-known rendezvous, describe contemporary manners with some gayety and purity of style. Other plays followed, including a few pastoral dramas, until Belleau and Baif, alarmed by these new departures, called attention once more to the example of the ancients. The former composed a five-act comedy in verse, *La Reconnue*, out of an incident of the time; the other, who often drew the rank and fashion of Paris to his house in the Faubourg Saint Marceau by giving a concert there, and who was authorized by the court to establish an academy of music, translated the *Miles Gloriosus* under the title of *Le Brave, ou Taillebras*, and in 1567 had the satisfaction of seeing it performed at the Hôtel de Guise in the presence of Charles IX and Catherine de Medicis.

#### Garnier.

The new drama had not as yet exhibited much inventive or literary power, but two writers of widely dissimilar gifts now succeeded in relieving it from this reproach. Robert Garnier, lieutenant-general at Mans, had carried off a prize at the Jeux Floraux by an ode,

and the applause bestowed upon this and other of his effusions encouraged him to take a loftier flight. Beginning at the age of thirty-four, he wrote eight tragedies, chiefly on classical subjects, and all of them well received. To far-reaching scholarship, the fruit of a liberal education at Toulouse, he united a fervid imagination, rare delicacy of thought and feeling, and a fine sense of moral dignity. His style, though originally formed upon that of Seneca and the Pleiade, is often characterized by a majestic simplicity, notably in the choruses. Nor did his works fall upon an unappreciative age. In the words of Pasquier, he "was allowed on all hands to have eclipsed his predecessors" in France. Success only stimulated him to greater effort; his *Juives*, which relates to the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, marks the culminating point in a course of progressive improvement, and prouder laurels would probably have fallen to his lot if death had not carried him off in his fifty-sixth year. His faith in antique models did not prevent him from making important innovations, all of which were adopted by other dramatists. His *Bradamanthe*, in addition to containing the first confidant, was the first real tragi-comedy written in French.

#### Larivey.

One of the contemporaries of Garnier, Pierre de Larivey, a native of Champagne, but of Italian parentage, exercised an equally inspiring influence in comedy. In 1577, a band of Venetian players, named the Gelosi, appeared before Henri III and his court at Blois and the

Hôtel de Bourbon. On their way to Paris they had been taken prisoners by the Huguenots, but were promptly ransomed by the king, at whose invitation they had crossed the Alps. According to L'Étoile, and greatly to the disgust of that eccentric annalist, their audiences were "larger than the congregations of the four best preachers in the capital put together." The repertory of the Gelosi seems to have included examples of Italian comedy in its more popular forms, chiefly the *commedia dell' arte*, with its meagre outline of intrigue and character, on which the actors extemporized their dialogue and by-play. Larivey, who had some connection with the court, was stimulated by these performances to apply himself to dramatic work. Six "pièces facétieuses" from his pen, all more or less founded upon ancient Italian plays, as he was the first to avow, appeared between this time and 1579, and were marked by a verve peculiar to himself.

### Popularity of the Secular Drama.

As a result of this impetus, the secular drama found a more permanent home than châteaux and colleges could afford. Yet, for a time, it met with strong opposition from the Basochians and the Enfants sans Souci, as also from the Church, whose more zealous members denounced the theatre as "the house of Satan, and the meeting-place for a thousand scandalous assignations." The war of the League had also a retarding influence; but when peace and prosperity were restored to Paris by Henry IV the drama took vigorous root. No other

form of entertainment enjoyed a tithe of its popularity. Nailed to posts in the streets, theatrical announcements were surrounded by knots of citizens, and the theatre, still at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, was often crowded to its utmost capacity. The curtain rose at two o'clock, or in winter a little earlier, so as to enable spectators to reach their homes before footpads took advantage of the darkness to ply their calling. There were no seats, except a few rows close to the stage for cavaliers and dames of high degree, the floor being covered with a thin layer of rushes. The king, who liked to see and be seen by his subjects, was a frequent guest, and was easily recognized by his gaunt figure, his pleasant laugh and his merry, twinkling eyes. The theatre was dimly lighted with oil lamps, but the gestures and facial expression of the actors could be distinctly seen, as arrayed in modern garb, even in plays founded on ancient history or legend, they recited the sonorous alexandrines of Garnier, or the sprightly dialogue of Larivey.

### Plays at Public Fairs.

The success of these players soon deprived them of the monopoly they had enjoyed, which did not apply to the fairs held in the suburbs of Paris, where most of the city's trade was conducted. First, a few provincial comedians established a theatre in the Foire Saint Germain, at that time the most popular in the country. Then, in 1599, another provincial troupe, headed by Mathieu Laporte and his wife, Marie, the first actress of whom any record is preserved, appeared at the Foire

Saint Germain. The lady was a host in herself, and her husband was soon permitted to open a house of his own, afterward known as the Théâtre du Marais.

### Montchrétien.

The rival troupes were compelled to rely chiefly on old plays; for of the many dramatists who sought to rival or excel the works of Garnier and Larivey, one only was successful. This was Antoine Montchrétien, a name associated with a somewhat curious history. The son of a Huguenot apothecary, he became an orphan at an early age, and though intended for the army, settled in Paris as a man of letters. But his choice was certainly not through want of courage, for on one occasion he withstood alone a dangerous assault made upon him by the Baron de Gourville and two bravos, for which he received, as damages, twelve thousand livres. For the Hôtel de Bourgogne he wrote several tragedies, which were acted about the year 1600. Encouraged by his success, he wooed and won a titled and wealthy widow, whereupon he assumed the sonorous name of Montchrétien de Vastville. While at work on another tragedy, *L'Écossaise*, dealing with the fate of Mary Queen of Scots, he amused himself with making cutlery at a forge in the Orleans forest, selling his wares, or exposing them for sale, in Paris. He afterward identified himself with the Huguenots at La Rochelle, and while on the road to military fame was killed by a party of royalist soldiers in a hostelry at Trouville. As a dramatist he followed in the track of Garnier, whom

in some respects he surpassed, especially in the management of choruses.

### *The Three Farce-Players.*

The dearth of acceptable plays induced the theatres to turn their attention once more to the farce, a dramatic plant of native and vigorous growth. By doing so, the Hôtel de Bourgogne appears to have struck a mine of wealth, engaging the services of three clever and versatile actors, who, beginning life as baker's apprentices, had already become famous on the stage, under the names of Turlupin, Gros-Guillaume and Gaultier-Garguille. The favorite character of the first was a roguish valet, of the second a pedant, and of the third a supremely stupid old man. Turlupin was held to be unapproachable in the domain of broad comedy, and was of imposing presence. Gros-Guillaume, so called on account of his obesity, had a fund of rich humor, the effect of which was increased by his large black eyes and extremely mobile features. It is said that he kept the audience in a continuous ripple of laughter, even when suffering acutely, as he often did, from an internal malady which caused the tears to run down his face. Gaultier-Garguille was hardly less popular, though in a different way. A Norman by birth, he could imitate the Gascon to perfection, and all his farcical characters were either witty or dryly humorous. His success was partly due to a pair of remarkably thin and bandy legs, though he was always glad to hide this defect under a robe, especially the stage robe of a king. By him were

composed nearly all the songs and prologues of the farces acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. These three farce-players were the firmest of friends.

### Italian Players.

About 1601 a band of Italian players found favor at the court, playing at Fontainebleau before Henri IV, who placed at their disposal the Hôtel d'Argent, while Sully, as we learn from his memoirs, built a theatre for them in his château. They were decried and satirized by native actors, who nevertheless did not disdain to take a leaf out of their book, the farce-players wearing masks, except Gros-Guillaume, who whitened his face with flour. At the Théâtre du Marais, where, in default of such actors as the Turpulin troupe, farce was not specially attractive, characters borrowed from the Spaniards were added to the repertory.

### Hardi.

In tragedy and comedy, the Théâtre du Marais was far ahead of its rival, largely due to the ability of Alexandre Hardi, who had recently come to Paris, seeking to effect some radical changes in the character of the French drama. Little is known of his early career, except that he was born in Paris in 1560, received what in those days was deemed a liberal education, and then went into the country as a strolling player.

Hardi was more or less a disciple of the non-classical drama from the moment he began to write. He concerned himself with action rather than narration, subor-



dinating everything to dramatic effect. He imported comic elements into the deepest tragedy, and he liked to carry on his dialogue in speeches of only a few lines each. He disregarded the unities of place and time to a greater extent than his predecessors, now shifting the scene of a piece from Athens to western Europe, and now causing a personage to pass from youth to old age in the interval between two acts. Above all, as though to show that such innovations were not of independent origin, the majority of his plays, while founded upon ancient history or legend, are filled with details borrowed from Spain. If so audacious a plagiarist had chanced to pay a visit to London at this time, when the gifts of Shakespeare were beginning to find their highest expression, the *Merchant of Venice* and *Hamlet*, with other pieces known to the patrons of the Blackfriars and Globe theatres, might have been transferred to the Paris stage as original French works.

In his enthusiasm for the new system, however, Hardy did not entirely abandon the old, and his theatre was less an imitation of the Spanish drama than an attempt to blend it with the French. That he exposed the stability of the established drama to a crucial test there can be no doubt; his writings brought fame and fortune to the Théâtre du Marais, and he was saluted on nearly all hands as a "Maitre." In truth, the new dramatist united a keen sense of stage effect to grandiloquence of language, and the audience was too much excited by his forcible situations to observe that he fell far below Garnier and Montchrétien in imagination, dignity and grace. His masterpiece, perhaps, was *Mariamne*, the first of

many adaptations to theatrical purposes of the narration in Josephus.

From this time Hardi exhibits a change for the worse. Beset by poverty, aware that the public liked novelty for its own sake, and finding that his name—for the names of authors were now given in the bills—insured success to anything he wrote, however trivial it might be, he took less and less pains with his work. He deliberately merged the poet and the artist in the playwright. He took incidents from various sources, huddled them together with no higher object than that of carrying away his audience, and tricked them off in verse written with fatal facility, most of his later pieces being composed and represented within a week. "Heaven be praised!" he would exclaim, "I can subordinate all loftier aspirations to the demands of my trade." By doing so, it seems, he put money in his purse; but the liberal fashion he had introduced was thereby brought into disrepute, at least with the more cultivated playgoers.

#### Viaud.

Before long a reaction became apparent. The works of four authors, not unworthy of the name of poets, appeared most simultaneously at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in support of the pre-Hardian drama. First in order of time was Theophile Viaud, the son of an advocate practicing at Bordeaux. At the age of twenty-six he threw off, among various kinds of verse, a *Pirame et Thisbé*, which not undeservedly took the town by storm. His connection with the stage, however, ended as soon as it

began. He courted notoriety by means of licentious verse, and for several months was banished from the country of his birth. But exile had little or no effect upon his future conduct. He was either the author or concerned in the authorship of the *Parnasse Satirique*; and the Parlement, deeming him guilty of lèse majesté, sentenced him to be burned alive in the Place de Grève. The culprit sought safety in flight, but was arrested in Picardy, immured in the Conciergerie, and told to prepare for the worst. The sentence, however, was executed only in effigy; for powerful influence being exerted in his favor, the Parlement, after a cruelly protracted deliberation, contented itself with sending him again into exile.

But the cause which Viaud had espoused did not suffer from want of adherents. The marquis de Racan, who, though ill-educated in early life, was no stranger to Tasso's *Aminta* and Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, gave to the world, in *Les Bergeries, ou Arthenice*, a pastoral marked by refinement, elegance and tenderness. Handsome Jean Gombaud, who had gained a footing at the court of Marie de Medicis by means of some verses on the death of her husband, became a rival of Racan on his own ground, and may well have succeeded in making him uneasy for his laurels. Then a bard of the mature age of sixteen, Jean Mairet, came forward with *Chriséide et Armand*, a tragi-comedy, and *La Silvie*, a tragi-comedy-pastoral. It did not require exceptional sagacity to perceive that the author of *La Silvie* would make a name for himself in the arena of letters.

Fortunately for the classicists, the school they warred

against was soon to lose its principal support. In 1623, placed above want by the proceeds of his work, "old Hardi," as he had come to be called, bade an informal farewell to the theatre, his last production being a pastoral entitled *Le Triomphe d'Amour*. By this time, according to his own confession, he had put together no fewer than six hundred plays, forty-one of which have come down to us. Hitherto, perhaps, his literary value has not been adequately recognized. He was persistently decried by those who rejected his dramatic theory; and the world at large, reluctant to believe that one who wrote so much could have written well, has adopted their estimate without taking the trouble to ascertain how far it is borne out by facts. His work in general is supposed to be loosely ordered, to abound in vulgar claptrap to the absolute exclusion of poetry, and to bear about the same relation to the best examples of the modern European drama as a gaudily colored print to a picture by Raphael or Leonardo. This impression will doubtless be modified if he is studied at first hand, for in most of his pieces there are really many exceedingly fine thoughts and phrases, as well as numerous bursts of passion.

### The Classic and Romantic Schools.

Hardi's disappearance was followed by a sharp contest for supremacy between the classical and the romantic schools. Racan and Gombaud contented themselves with a single contribution to the stage; but Mairet, whose success had opened to him the doors of the most exclusive Parisian society, continued to labor with all the ardor of

youth, and was induced by the cardinal de la Valette and the comte de Carmail to pay more attention to unities of place and time. On the other hand, three authors of no inconsiderable merit threw the weight of their influence into the opposite scale. Balthasar Baro, formerly secretary to the marquis d'Urfé, whose *Astrée* he had recently completed, brought forth a poëme-heröique entitled *Célinde*, the personages of which relate in tragic form the story of Judith and Holofernes. Hardly less precocious than the author of *La Silvie*, Jean Rotrou, the youngest representative of one of the most ancient families at Dreux, was the next to enter the lists. At the age of nineteen he had the pleasure of seeing two of his pieces—*L'Hypocondriaque* and *La Bague de l'Oubli*—performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne with marked success. Based more or less on the model of Hardy, they yet presented evidence of original thought, if not of a natural talent for the drama.

### Scudéri.

Conspicuous among the rivals of Rotrou was Georges de Scudéri, a dashing officer of the Guards. Descended from a good old Provençal family, he was born at Havre de Grâce in 1601, entered the army in his teens, and had already acquired some notoriety in the capital as a fine gentleman with a mania for collecting paintings, coins and tulips. Madeleine de Scudéri, his sister, had meanwhile made their name famous by writing short pieces of poetry; indeed, she was known as the "modern Sappho" and the "tenth muse." Pressed for money—

for his patrimony and his pay were not sufficient to gratify his expensive tastes—Georges turned his attention to the stage. His first attempt was *Ligdamon et Lidias*, a tragi-comedy, and in the preface thereto he poses before his readers as one writing simply for his own diversion. "The printers and the players," he says, "will bear witness that I have not sold what I might have expected them to buy." In all probability he had given away the piece on the understanding that it should be acted and otherwise published; but he certainly had no intention to go on writing for nothing, as may be inferred from the fact that, in order to keep his head above water, he prevented his sister, over whom he had a strong influence, from accepting three advantageous offers of marriage, compelled her to keep her study for a prescribed number of hours every day, and spent upon himself a considerable portion of the fruits of her partly enforced industry. Notwithstanding many defects, *Ligdamon et Lidias*, in which the example of Hardi is followed, and to which, we may suspect, Madeleine contributed some of the most graceful lines, was sufficiently well received to make the players look for other pieces from the "Sieur de Scudéri." The classicists, alive to the formidable nature of the opposition arrayed against them, manifested increased vigor; and Mairet, after distinguishing himself on the staff of the duc de Montmorenci in the war against the Huguenots, brought out a *Sophonisbe*, similar in structure and treatment to Trissino's tragedy of that name. In Mairet's drama as in Rucellai's *Rosmunda*, both typical Renaissance plays, real poetic sentiment is much less conspicuous than the arid ped-



antry and ostentatious scholarship which were still the characteristics of the classic drama in France.

### Predominance of Classic Drama.

It soon became evident that the elder of the two schools was crushing its rival. Nearly every writer of tragedy evinced an increasing tendency to compose in conformity with the Aristotelian precepts, to present the most perfect symmetry of form, and generally to infuse a serene and lofty dignity. Except as regards theatrical effect, the practical value of which had been too conclusively shown to be overlooked, the theory and practice of *Hardi* were gradually abandoned. In comedy the dramatist enjoyed a little more freedom, but even here it was thought necessary to observe a code of laws by no means favorable to the display of humor and natural truth. Nor will this contraction of the scope and power of the drama be a matter of much surprise if the dominant spirit of the age is borne in mind. The reaction toward culture, which set in at the end of the wars, had not been productive of unmixed benefit. It had given rise to extremely artificial tastes among the leaders of Parisian society. The graceful triflings of a *Voiture* were accepted as poetry, the unreal shepherds and shepherdesses of *Astrée* as the quintessence of literary beauty. Moreover, it was the fashion to affect extreme delicacy of thought, sentiment and expression. The florid style, which *Gongora* introduced in Spain and *Marini* in Italy, had made its appearance in France, where it found a swarm of imitators. Even the language of passion and



the formulæ of politeness became a tissue of hyperbole, of trope and figure, of extravagant metaphor and emblem. In vain did Malherbe and Balzac plead for the use of French, pure and simple; intelligible speech was regarded as a distinctive mark of ill-breeding. It was the age of the princess—the age when elegant ladies, holding their receptions in bed, with their guests grouped about them, rapturously listened to conversation in which, as La Bruyère puts it, “a flight of rhetoric not very easy to understand was followed by something more obscure, to be outdone in its turn by enigma after enigma, each more difficult to understand than its predecessor, but all greeted with prolonged applause.”

Nowhere did this transcendentalism flourish more than at the hotel—under the shadow of the Louvre—of the marquise de Rambouillet, the heroine of Racan’s *Bergeries*. In the eyes of such over-refined society the Romanesque drama found little or no favor, and was decried as bizarre, inartistic, fit only for the common people. If, notwithstanding her decadence as a nation, Spain had begun to exert a moral and social influence in France, with an inclination in Paris to dress and swear in the most approved Castilian fashion, the name of Lopé de Vega was treated as synonymous with theatrical barbarism. The system he derided, with its studied regularity of form and elaborate declamation, was accounted as a triumph of good taste by the fashionable loungers at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, who would doubtless have been more impressed by a hand-made cascade than a mountain torrent, by a finely laid out garden than the rugged grandeur of Swiss or Highland scenery. Moving among

the best company of the capital, Rotrou and others were insensibly induced to modify or lay aside the principles on which they had started, and the school of Jodelle slowly overbore its once powerful antagonist. Nevertheless, its supremacy was still far from being assured. It presented but few examples of exceptional merit, and was emasculated by an inclination among its poets to adopt the style of the précieuses, afterward ridiculed by Molière. Happily for its interests, though not, perhaps, for dramatic art, there was now to appear a writer who brought himself to accept its precepts, yet aimed at vigor rather than refinement, and who soon developed a genius rare enough to give him almost undisputed authority as a model for imitation.

Before passing in review the life and works of one who is commonly accepted as the greatest or among the greatest of French dramatists, due credit should be given to those who preceded him—to the age which began with Jodelle's *Cléopâtre Captive*, in 1552, and continued throughout the century. Briefly summarized, this age includes the tragedies of Jodelle, La Péruse, Bounyn, Grevin, the brothers De la Taille, Monchrétien and Garnier. In comedy there are Belleau, a member of the Pleiad, who reproduced the swaggering captain of the Plautian comedy already approached by Jodelle. Grevin, Turnèbe, D'Amboise, Larivey and others copied or adapted to their comedies Italian manners, characters and intrigue, the last, as we have seen, openly professing to imitate the poets of Italy, his native land, translating almost literally from Dolce, Secchi and other Italian dramatists, while later, Molière, in his turn,

owed much to this lively and versatile author, and in this respect, too, his efforts met with much popular appreciation.

Before either tragedy or comedy entered upon the era when genius was to leave its impress with creations of undying merit, they had passed, with other branches of literature, through a new experience in the nation's annals. The turmoils and terrors of the great wars of the sixteenth century had been followed by a reaction toward culture and refinement, and Malherbe, the father of the French style, had set the seal on the results of the Renaissance. The people, meanwhile, continued to relieve their weariness by the aid of that half cynical gayety which, among the French, is ever to be found amid the darkest hours of their national life.

## II.

### Corneille and His Times.

Among the most faithful of the civil officers who served the French government at the opening of the seventeenth century was Maître Thomas Corneille, king's advocate and superintendent of forests and streams in the viscomté of Rouen. In the latter capacity he was often exposed to danger; for in the event of a famine visiting his province—a very common occurrence—the people would set all authority at defiance, hang the guardians of the peace, and plunder any building where food was to be had. In such emergencies Corneille acted with remarkable vigor and promptness, especially when a swarm of famishing peasants laid waste the forests of Roumaire and the adjoining country. His home was in the city of Rouen, where, in 1606, his wife gave birth to one of the greatest of French poets and dramatists, Pierre Corneille.

### Youth of Corneille.

Pierre grew from infancy to manhood in the quaint, old-fashioned town which had witnessed the martyrdom of Jeanne d'Arc, then a little network of crooked and

narrow streets, lined with wooden houses, but dignified by the venerable cathedral erected in their midst. He was educated among the Jesuits, who desired to adopt him into their order; but in this they were disappointed, although he was of an austere and religious temperament. He appears to have been a diligent student; for there is still preserved a prize which he gained in his thirteenth year—a folio volume stamped in gold with the arms of the lieutenant-general of Normandy. His college days ended, Pierre began the study of law, and, through his father's influence, was admitted as an advocate four years before the usual time.

But Pierre Corneille was not destined for the bar. While practice and promotion came quickly enough, he was neither quick-witted nor ready of speech. Moreover, he felt that he was out of his element. What he liked best was to write poetry, and to this an imperious instinct urged him to apply himself with all the energies of a cultured and inventive genius. His earliest verses, it is said, were in the form of a tribute to a pretty neighbor, a Madame Dupont. Soon afterward, by the merest accident, his attention was turned to the drama. A young lady named Milet, who lived with her parents near the Corneille residence, was introduced by her accepted lover to the youthful poet, to whom she straightway transferred her affections; but Pierre, it seems, did not return them.

### *Mélite.*

At this time it chanced that a troupe of strolling players, headed by Mondori, was performing at Rouen a

selection from Hardi's plays, and for them Corneille wrote his first comedy. Its title was *Mélite, ou les Fausses Lettres*, and its heroine the fickle Mlle. Millet. So well pleased was Mondori with the piece, that he took it to Paris, where it was performed at the Théâtre du Marais. Though hardly worthy of Corneille, it was well enough as a first effort, apart from the discourtesy—to use no harsher phrase—displayed in the selection of the theme. In some respects it was a surprise to the audience; for its author relied on character rather than caricature, on spirited dialogue rather than stale and stupid jest. Corneille himself afterward said that in writing it he had nothing to guide him but a little common sense and the example of Hardi; but he was certainly more indebted to the former than to the latter. At first *Mélite* was coldly received, but won favor with later performances, and presently became one of the stock pieces of the Théâtre du Marais.

#### Mondori.

Corneille's comedy brought more profit to Mondori than to himself. Instead of returning to the provinces, the latter became chief actor at the Théâtre du Marais, now transferred to a tennis court in the old Rue du Temple. Meanwhile the company had undergone many changes. Old faces had disappeared, and though the three farce-players were here, they had a formidable rival in Jodelet, who possessed a fund of the richest and broadest of humor. His face, it is said, was so comic that he had only to show himself on the stage to convulse the audience with laughter, and this was vastly intensified

by the questioning look of helpless amazement with which he regarded the spectators.

Under the leadership of Mondori, whose forte was tragedy, the Marais company far outdistanced its rivals. "This remarkable man," says one of his critics, "owed nothing to accident. Merit such as his would have been rewarded, in ancient days, with crowns and statues. No one ever appeared on the stage with more honor; for he showed himself to be thoroughly imbued with a sense of the grandeur of the passions which he represented. Endowed with the faculty of self-abandonment, he imprinted upon the mind the sentiments he expressed. His change of countenance seemed to come from the movements of his heart, and his elocution and gestures, too, were excellent." And the gifts thus cultivated were allied to physical advantages—a symmetrical figure, a majestic bearing and fine, expressive features.

### Mairet and Burger.

The competition between the two theatres—the Marais and Hôtel de Bourgogne—now became very keen. Eight plays by the chief dramatists of the day were given in rapid succession. Mairet wrote *Antoine et Cleopatre* and *Soliman*, and Rotrou several others, among which was *Hercule Mourant*. Hastily written, these pieces, with the exception of the last, will not repay perusal. Nor were the actors content to rely exclusively upon established writers. Manuscripts which had been treated with indifference were eagerly read, and this was a time when young and unknown dramatists, if possessed of talent,



might be sure to find a hearing. Among others who did so were two of the literary toilers of Paris. One, named De Rayssiguier, a Languedocian, after being imprisoned for some months by Cardinal Richelieu, had come to Paris, partly to try his fortune with the pen, but chiefly in the hope of assuring his future by marriage with a wealthy lady. Both as a dramatist and fortune-hunter, however, he completely failed, and his last days seem to have been passed in extreme poverty. Duryer, the other new dramatist, had also reason to exclaim against fate. He began life under favorable auspices, belonged to a noble family, and through their influence had obtained the honorable but far from lucrative post of *secrétaire du roi*. In an evil hour he married a portionless girl, who presented him with seven children in about as many years. His family, disapproving of the match, entirely discarded him; and at length, reduced to want, he sold his office for a mere trifle, strove to earn a livelihood for himself and those dependent upon him by translating for booksellers, and turned his attention to the theatre. He resided at a little village a mile or two from Paris, and here, one bright summer afternoon, he was visited by Vigneul de Marville and one or two friends. "He received us," writes the annalist, "with delight, spoke to us of his plans for the future, and showed us his works. It touched us to find that, unashamed of his poverty, he wished to give us a collation. We sat down under a tree; a cloth was spread out on the grass, and while his wife brought us some milk, he procured some cherries, fresh water and brown bread. The repast seemed to us excellent, but we could not bid

our kind host adieu without being moved to see him so ill-treated by fortune." Better days, however, were in store for the struggling author, at this time only in his twenty-seventh year. His first play, a tragi-comedy called *Argenis et Poliarque*, was cordially received, and the duc de Vendome made him his secretary.

### *Clitandre.*

Corneille, to whom this activity in the theatrical world was in a great measure due, produced at this time a tragi-comedy entitled *Clitandre*. Here, as in his first piece, he seemed more anxious to astonish than to interest his audience, though in a very different way. "During a journey which I made to Paris," he writes, "I perceived that *Mélite* was not in conformity with the time rule—the only rule then known. I heard, too, that my fellow-dramatists censured it as possessing too little effect, and the style as too familiar. In order to justify myself, and to show that this sort of play might be distinguished by true dramatic beauty, I undertook, in a spirit of bravado, to write one which should be in accordance with the twenty-four hours' regulation, full of incident, in a style more elevated, but generally worthless." In other words, he "wished to censure rather than comply with the tastes of the public." In the case of a rising dramatist such self-stultification is hardly credible, but the sincerity of Corneille is placed beyond doubt by the fact that *Clitandre*, unlike *Mélite*, is overcrowded with incidents and inflated in expression. By the force of contrast, it would seem, the audience were driven to the conclusion that the

author of *Mélite* was taking a wrong course, and that the sooner he returned to the path opened up by that comedy the better. The object with which *Clitandre* had been written, he tells us, "was completely attained."

### Boisrobert.

Jealous of the honors already gained by the young Rouen lawyer, a hanger-on at the Palais Cardinal, the abbé François de Boisrobert, proceeded to measure his strength against him in dramatic writing.

Lettered Paris may well have been on the tip-toe of expectation as to the result. The abbé was not only the inseparable companion of the all-powerful Richelieu, but had the reputation of being the most amusing talker in the capital. In early life, during a visit to Rome, his facility in this respect commended him to the notice of pope Urban VIII, who besought him to enter the Church. The young man's parents had intended him for the law, and his tastes did not incline to the ecclesiastical profession; but the prospect opened up to him by the personal good-will of the pope was too alluring to be resisted; he promptly qualified himself for holy orders, and was made canon at Rouen. Nearly the whole of Boisrobert's time, however, was spent in Paris, where, thanks to his gayety and humor, he was admitted to the choicest society. At the Palais Cardinal he quickly established a firm footing, and none of the festive gatherings there were deemed complete without him. No one could more effectually make Richelieu throw off the cares of state than this worldly-minded abbé. "Monseigneur," said a physician

to the great cardinal, "we do all we can for you, but our drugs are useless unless you mix them with a dram or two of Boisrobert." Richelieu was not wanting in gratitude; the abbé received at his hands the titles of king's almoner and councillor of state, letters of nobility, and, as more substantial gifts, the abbey of Chatillon-sur-Seine and the priory of Ferté-sur-Aube. Boisrobert was now forty years of age, but neither the effects of time nor the nature of his calling appears to have had the slightest effect upon his mode of living. He was always to be found at the Palais Cardinal, the theatre or the gaming-table; for he never permitted his sacerdotal obligations to interfere with his pleasures. He once found a man dying in the street from wounds received in a duel, and therefore in urgent need of the consolations of religion. But Boisrobert was on the way to a fashionable gathering; so, briefly enjoining the victim to "think of God and say his Benedicite," he hurried on. In a few short intervals of solitude he composed a tragi-comedy on the story of Pirandré and Lisimène; and the result, if not equal to his own expectations, was such as to encourage him to take up the pen again.

#### Corneille's Comedies.

Three comedies by Corneille—*La Veuve*, *La Galérie du Palais* and *La Suivante*—next demand our attention. The first, though somewhat weak, won high praise, especially from Scudéri and Mairé. "Le soleil est levé," exclaimed the former; "retirez-vous étoiles!" It is worthy of note that the action of *La Veuve* is spread over

four days. "I have sought," the author writes, "to find a mean between the severity of the rules and the liberty which is only too common on the French stage; the first is rarely capable of good effects." By *La Galérie du Palais* a much-needed reform was accomplished. Many young and sprightly women now graced the boards, and Corneille, having need of a servant in the piece, substituted for the common nurse a sort of soubrette. The change was hailed by all thinking persons as for the better, and before long the obnoxious character became a thing of the past. *La Suivante*, while pleasantly written, is disfigured by more than one grave defect. The whole of the plot is made to turn upon a character in itself not very strong—that of a rather commonplace soubrette—Corneille appearing, in this instance, to have lost sight of the principles of dramatic effect. Moreover, he permitted himself to fall into a species of affectation. The five acts into which the piece is divided are of exactly the same length, and in one scene the characters speak only one line at a time.

#### Gros-Guillaume and His Friends.

The Hôtel de Bourgogne, the theatre in which these pieces were produced, was now to lose the three farceurs who had so long upheld its fortunes. Gros-Guillaume, it would appear, had the hardihood to caricature on the stage some exceedingly unpopular magistrates. The player paid dearly for the applause which greeted the performance, for he was arrested behind the scenes, hurried into a coach, and conveyed to the Conciergerie.

This measure had a far more serious result than even the offended magistrates could have wished. The loss of his liberty, joined to painful misgivings as to the results of his imprudence, preyed so much on the prisoner's mind that he died. Gaultier-Garguille and Turlupin took their loss so grievously to heart that it is hardly too much to say they never held up their heads again. Nor will their grief seem unnatural or excessive, when it is remembered that since youth they had been associated with Gros-Guillaume on the stage, and had always been united to him by ties of the closest friendship. Far advanced in years, they were unable to withstand so heavy a blow, and in less than a week after Gros-Guillaume died, his old comrades had both joined him in the grave. In death, as in life, the three farceurs were inseparable.

#### **Jodelet and Harduin.**

The void thus caused in the theatre was filled up in a most unexpected way. Louis XIII ordered six members of the Marais company, including Jodelet, to transfer their services to the Hôtel de Bourgogne, in the prosperity of which he appears to have taken much interest. Jodelet was still popular, but Bellerose, anxious to make his company as strong as possible in comedy, engaged, as an additional attraction, one Bertrand Harduin de St. Jacques. The newcomer had no experience on the stage. Educated for the medical profession, he had, in some wild freak, run away from home, and had since gained a precarious livelihood with a band of peripatetic quack doctors by expatiating in public upon the mar-

vellous qualities of their nostrums. Thus he had acquired a certain readiness of wit and power of repartee. Suddenly, by favor of Bellerose, he was transformed into a comedian at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where, probably out of deference to his family, who were well connected, he took the name of Guillet-Gorju. The manager's faith in him was abundantly justified; the confidence to face an audience was already his, and in a short time he so far mastered the technicalities of the stage as to bring into effective play a fine sense of humor.

### Place Royale.

Of the new plays, the most important was Corneille's *Place Royale*, in many respects a clever production, but now remembered chiefly by reason of an idle charge brought against the author. M. Clavaret, an advocate of Orleans, had abandoned the law for the drama, and by some unexplained means had just brought out a piece bearing the same name before the king at Forges. No sooner did the second *Place Royale* appear than he accused Corneille, with whom, it appears, he was slightly acquainted, of writing it for no other purpose than to expose a rival to damaging comparisons. "Had you," he says, "been able to rise superior to a wish to overshadow me, you would have given your *Place Royale* another name. From the time you knew I was treating this subject you resolved to appropriate it, either to gratify your jealousy or to please the actors you serve." Corneille, however, had no reason to be afraid of Clavaret, and it is significant that the *Place Royale* of the



latter, although it had "the good fortune of pleasing the king," was never printed.

### **Richelieu as a Dramatist.**

About this time the illustrious statesman who shaped the destinies of the country makes his appearance on the stage. The character of Richelieu presents an almost unique combination of strength and weakness, of great ideas and petty foibles. In all the stupendous tasks he had undertaken—in the extinction of the Huguenots as a political element, in the conversion of the old feudal confederacy into an absolute monarchy, and in the elevation of France in the scale of nations at the expense of what had long been the preponderating power in Europe—he triumphed by the sheer force of a vigorous intellect, sustained by high moral courage and unfaltering determination. His mind once made up, he went straight to his object, now eking out the lion's skin with the fox's, anon striking with a hand of iron those who barred his way, and finally, as he is himself reported to have said, "covering up all with his red cassock." Surrounded by avowed or secret enemies, the more numerous and hopeful on account of the vacillation of the king, he lived in a state of constant peril from their machinations, but succeeded in keeping them at bay. Nor was this all; the armor of the warrior could at times be seen through the robe of the cardinal, and his formation of the Académie Française was largely due to an enlightened faith in the importance of learning. The international fame which he won as a statesman was not

enough for Richelieu. Yielding to the impulses of a morbid self-esteem, he wished to shine in other ways. He affected to be versed in Hebrew and Arabic. He posed at the Hôtel de Rambouillet as a metaphysician by discussing theses of love. Covetous of literary distinction, he composed "beaux livres de devotion," and would have given much to be the author of a good play. He was not even exempt from purely personal vanity; occasionally, in order to set off the shapeliness of his figure to the best advantage, he would present himself to the ladies of his acquaintance—the more readily if Marion Delorme happened to be among them—in the guise of a young and seductive cavalier.

### *The Five Poets.*

The cardinal's taste for dramatic work now assumed unexpected prominence. He engaged a staff of poets to assist him in writing a comedy. First was the lively Boisrobert, who, it need hardly be said, accepted the invitation with alacrity. Next came Guillaume Colletet, an avocat au Parlement, but with a greater predilection for verse-making than law. The third author, Claude de L'Étoile, son of the annalist, was blessed with creative fancy and a small fortune, and might have made a name for himself if he had not frittered away his time and energy in pleasure. His judgment was held in high respect at the Palais Cardinal, although he often displeased his eminence by ridiculing the supposed necessity of rhyme. The other poets selected were Corneille and Rotrou, the former of whom prob-

ably owed the honor less to an appreciation of his excellence as a dramatist than to the fact that he had written some graceful lines of welcome to Richelieu and Louis XIII when, in the previous year, they paid a formal visit to Rouen. The staff thus completed, it was arranged that their works should be played at the Palais Cardinal, in a salon set apart and fitted up for that purpose.

In receipt of a pension from Richelieu, whom they termed their maître, the "Cinq Auteurs," as they were called, produced a comedy entitled *Les Tuileries*. The groundwork was supplied by the cardinal, and each of his poets, by arrangement among themselves, wrote a particular act. Colletet took charge of the monologue, with certain lines of which Richelieu was so well pleased that he presented the author with fifty pistoles. "Understand," he said in doing so, "that this is only for these lines; the king is not rich enough to permit of my paying for the rest."

#### *Les Tuileries.*

The cardinal himself wrote the prologue, but at the last moment, not being pleased with it, he induced Chapelain, in consideration of a liberal gift, to stand forward as its author. Finally *Les Tuileries* was represented before the king and his court, the Cinq Auteurs, who were so pointedly eulogized in the prologue that for a moment every eye must have been directed toward them, occupying seats in the best part of the salle. How the piece was received we are not told, but that it fell short of even reasonable expectation can hardly be questioned.

The next piece composed by the Cinq Auteurs was *L'Aveugle de Smyrne*, and after its completion Corneille withdrew from the cardinal's service. The pride and exultation with which he entered upon his task had given place to very different feelings. Richelieu, as may be supposed, did not prove a genial collaborateur. He regarded the five poets merely as tools, and so treated them that they could not help being aware of the fact. It is true that he permitted them to criticise his suggestions, but he was in no wise disposed to consider their advice as to his own part of the work, which was the plot, never supposing that any of the poets would venture on such a liberty. Not realizing the extent of Richelieu's amour propre, and anxious that all parts of the comedy should hang well together, Corneille made a trifling change in the groundwork of the act intrusted to him. The cardinal's resentment knew no bounds. He angrily told the presumptuous poet that, if he wished to remain at the Palais Cardinal, he must have more esprit de suite—in other words, must submit to the will of his superior. The condition was one to which Corneille would not consent, and after finishing his share of the work on *L'Aveugle de Smyrne*, he suddenly discovered that urgent business required his presence at Rouen.

#### *Medée and Illusion.*

During his servitude at the Palais Cardinal, Corneille had found time for other work, and before leaving Paris two more plays from his hand were brought out at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The first was *Medée*, avowedly an

imitation of Seneca's tragedy on that subject, and in this, as has well been said, "was announced the Corneille of the future." *L'Illusion*, the second piece, did not sustain the fame achieved by Corneille's other comedies. In both plot and character it is singularly bizarre, with but slight charm of style. "If," writes one of Corneille's biographers, "I dare to say what I think of it, its failure was great." It is probable that he would not have thought or said as much if the dramatist himself had not described the play as a "galanterie extravagante unworthy of consideration."

Back again at Rouen, Corneille resumed his practice as an advocate, but gave most of his time and thoughts to the study of dramatic art. The affront put upon him by the cardinal rankled in his mind, and he determined to take revenge by producing a work superior to anything that had thus far come from his pen. By good fortune he became acquainted at this time with one M. de Chalon, formerly secretary to Marie de Medicis, and now living in retirement at Rouen. His opinions as to stage matters were not to be despised; he had been a constant playgoer in Paris, and was well read in Spanish dramatic literature. "Monsieur Corneille," he once said, "your comedies, it must be admitted, are full of spirit; but permit me to say that the track you are pursuing is unworthy of your talents. By adhering to it you will acquire only an ephemeral reputation. In the Spanish drama there are subjects which, treated in our taste and by a mind such as yours, would produce great effect. The language is not a difficult one; set about learning it, and you shall have all the assistance I can render."

Corneille eagerly accepted the offer, and his friend did not fail to keep his word. The effect of this acceptance upon the author's style soon became manifest.

### Study of *Lopé de Vega*.

Applying himself earnestly to his Spanish studies, the poet found himself in what he must have regarded as a new world. *Lopé de Vega*, now on the point of death, had created a drama singularly rich in incident, shot through with many golden threads of poetry, and in complete harmony with the spirit of the nation to which he belonged. In the first of these qualities, as we have seen, his work is particularly effective. It abounds in surprises, imbroglios, duels, assassinations, disguises, wild adventures, hair-breadth escapes, lovers' stratagems, midnight assignations and sharp conflicts between antagonistic passions and interests. The actors who represented it were obliged to lay in a large store of masks, dark lanterns, sliding panels, trap-doors and rope ladders. Nevertheless, it never assumes the ordinary melodramatic aspect, while in the most prosaic examples there are many fine bursts of passion, many gleams of pure tenderness, many animated expressions of chivalric sentiment. Above all, it was the only drama which at that time possessed a distinctively national character. It always breathes, whatever the subject may be, the spirit of the typical Spaniard—a man fully contained within himself, devout even to superstition, quick to resent injury, unostentatiously enthusiastic, intensely proud of the past greatness of his country, ever disposed to lend

an ear to the story of romantic adventure, morbidly keen upon all points of personal honor.

### The Cid.

*Las Mocedades del Cid*, a tragi-comedy by Guillen de Castro, the friend and rival of Lopé, fixed itself more firmly in Corneille's mind than anything else. Nor is this a matter of surprise. The name of the chief character is alone sufficient to give a special interest to the piece. Both history and romance, the latter especially, describe Roderigo Diaz de Bovar, usually called the Cid, as the most prominent Spaniard of the heroic period, as a pattern of knightly virtue and grace. His valor was equalled only by his wisdom, generosity and forbearance. More than five centuries had passed away since his death; but even now, at a time when mediæval ideas and institutions seemed to belong to a more or less remote past, the fame of his prowess exerted an inspiring influence, not only in Spain, but throughout western Europe. The mere perusal of *Las Mocedades del Cid*, it would seem, was enough to induce Corneille to try his powers on the same subject. He had a keen sympathy with the chivalric spirit, and it did not require a dramatist of his talent and experience to see that the conflict between love and duty in the minds of the hero and heroine would, if impressively treated, take an audience by storm. Before long he sat down to write *Le Cid*, striving to adapt the incidents to the requirements of the classical stage without losing their essential significance, and drawing from the old romances concerning Roder-



igo any details that might add to the force of the picture.

**Calprenède, Benscrade and Desmaretz.**

While Corneille was at work upon this play, the dramatic world in Paris showed abnormal activity. Novelty followed novelty at very brief intervals, and the brains of the players must have been almost turned by the number of speeches they had to learn. Mairet, Rotrou, Scuderi and Duryer frequently presented their pieces to the audience, but to comparatively little purpose. From half a dozen pieces by Rotrou, only one, *Les Sosies*, a free and somewhat piquant version of the Roman *Amphitryon*, was in any sense worthy of him. In sheer desperation, the leaders of the two companies allowed several untried authors to have a hearing. The first one, named Charles Beys, it is clear, had no special talent for the drama. The same remark may be applied to Calprenède, a young Gascon, who had arrived in Paris four years previously, become a cadet in the Guards, and ingratiated himself with the queen by reason of some cleverness as a story-teller. His literary reputation, such as it was, depended almost exclusively upon a few heroic romances which were greatly admired at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Of Calprenède's irascibility many instances are given. On one occasion, Richelieu, being asked by him to pronounce an opinion on some of his plays, said he thought the lines "laches." "Cadédis!" he hotly exclaimed, clapping his hand upon his sword, "comment laches?" His eminence did not deign to notice the thoughtless movement; at all events, the Gas-

con was not sent to cool his temper within the walls of the Bastille. Another candidate was Benserade, who belonged to a good family in Normandy, had been educated for the church, and was now sowing his wild oats in the capital. A passion for Madame Bellerose led him in the first instance to write for the theatre, where he found himself completely out of his element. Soon he gave up all thoughts of the ecclesiastical profession, and Richelieu, to whom he was related, thereupon accorded him a pension. Desmarets also owed much to Richelieu, who granted him several lucrative positions and also induced him to write for the stage, though he met with little success. The last one to be noticed is Ali-brai, whose career was somewhat unsavory. A brother of Madame de Saintot, he might have done well in life, but soon became a notorious sot. "I have at least made myself famous in the cabarets," he wrote, in answer to a hint that he had not turned his gifts and opportunities to account. He certainly did not make himself famous as a dramatist.

#### Tristan and His Mariamne.

*The Cid* was finished; and Corneille, doubtless rich in hope, brought the manuscript to Paris. He had no choice but to leave it at the Hôtel de Bourgogne or consent to delay, for at the other theatre Mondori was drawing what proved a veritable prize in the dramatic lottery. This was a tragedy by François Tristan, called *Mariamne*, in many respects a remarkable work. The interest usually excited by the announcement of a new play was deepened in this instance by the reputation of the

author. Tristan, now thirty-five years of age, was descended, if we may believe his own statement, from Peter the Hermit, and numbered among his ancestors the terrible grand-prévôt of Louis XI. In early life he found an influential friend in the marquis de Verneuil, but soon afterward he had the misfortune to kill a garde-du-corps in a duel, and as the edicts against duelling had not fallen into abeyance, he deemed it prudent to take refuge in England. His resources failing, he set forth for Spain, there to place himself under the protection of a relative, Juan de Velasquez. Crossing the channel in a fishing-boat, he started south on foot. In Poitou, coming to his last coin, he had recourse to Scévole de Sainte Marthe, who, struck by the refined manners of the tramp, received him as a favored guest, made him give up the idea of going to Spain, and procured for him the post of secretary to the marquis de Villars-Montpezat. The cloud which had so long hung over his prospects now passed away. Having accompanied the marquis to Bordeaux, where the court then happened to be, he was introduced to the king and informally absolved from his offense. We next find him in Paris, nominally as gentleman-in-ordinary to Gaston d'Orleans, but devoting the whole of his time to gambling, gallantry and tragedy-writing. It would seem that, while in London, he had been prevented by poverty, or an imperfect acquaintance with the English language, from paying many visits to its theatres; for no trace of English inspiration can be detected in anything he wrote. His first play, *Mariamne*, imitated from Calderon's *Telrarcade Jerusalem*, proved extremely successful, though less

by reason of its merits than for Mondori's powerful impersonation of Herod. According to Père Rapin, the audience was so affected that they "dispersed with a preoccupied air, an effect similar to that produced by the great Greek tragedies on the Athenians of old."

### Success of the *Cid*.

Desirous, probably, of matching himself against the new luminary while *Mariamne* was in the full tide of its popularity, Corneille brought out *Le Cid* as the year 1637 drew to a close. His confidence in its success was more than justified by the result. In regard to the plot, the piece labored under a serious disadvantage. The marriage of a woman to one at whose hands her father had met his death, albeit in an honorable duel, must have been deemed a repulsive incident; and the dramatist, instead of softening the repulsiveness by spreading the action over a number of years, in which the healing influence of time might have been exercised, had thought fit to construct the piece in compliance with the twenty-four-hour rule. In the space of one day, therefore, Chimène rises to the full consciousness of her attachment to Rodrigue, discovers that he has shed her father's blood, passionately exhorts the king to punish him with death, and then consents to accept his hand in marriage. But the defects of *The Cid* were far outweighed by its merits. The double strife between love and duty was depicted with matchless force and sympathy; the haughty spirit of the great vassals of mediæval Spain shone forth in all its energy; imaginative

power, vivid portraiture of character, glowing energy of thought and expression—nothing seemed wanting. The effect of such a play at a time when the romantic spirit had not died away may well be conceived. The audience were worked up to something like a frenzy of admiration, and the curtain fell upon by far the greatest triumph yet achieved on the French stage.

Nor was that triumph ephemeral. *Le Cid* had what was then thought a long run. From one end of Paris to the other it formed the chief subject of discussion. Men who cared nothing for the theatre and its works were induced to share in the sorrows of Rodrigue and Chimène. Parents taught their children to recite the most striking passages and "Beautiful as the Cid" became a familiar proverb. Richelieu's niece, Madame de Combalet, to whom the play was dedicated, probably in return for some kindness she had shown the author at the Palais Cardinal, became a sort of heroine in public estimation. The court, it would seem, was not behind the town in showing its approbation. The tragedy was thrice represented at the Louvre, and Louis XIII and his queen personally complimented the poet upon his work. Corneille the elder was granted letters of nobility, nominally in recognition of the energy and decision he had displayed in the discharge of his official duties, but really because he was the father of the author of *Le Cid*. Nor was the reputation of the play confined to France. "The Cid, translated and slightly altered by Joseph Rutter," tutor in the family of Lord Dorset, was represented before the English court at Whitehall, and soon afterward at the Cockpit in Drury Lane. King

Charles himself requested the author to publish his adaptation. Madrid, too, brought *Le Cid* upon the stage, and, as at the outset Corneille had frankly acknowledged that he was indebted to the play of Guillen de Castro for the essence of his plot—and this was the full extent of his obligation—the Spaniards had reason to credit him with honorable candor as well as dramatic genius. We may suspect, however, that the gravest Spaniards must have given way to merriment when they found that the scene was laid at Seville, a city which for two centuries after the time in question remained in the hands of the Moors. Certainly Corneille was not very well versed in Spanish history, however familiar he might be with the old chronicles relating to his hero. Before long, it may be added, *Le Cid* was translated into every European language, an honor entirely without precedent.

### Popularity of Corneille.

Parisian society was not backward in doing homage to the man who had written *Le Cid*. He was sought after, admitted to the most exclusive salons, and fairly surfeited with adulation. The shadowy figure of the author of *Mélite* and *L'Illusion* is thrown into clear relief by the light now shed upon it. Those who had never seen him before must have gazed upon him with mild astonishment on his first introduction among them. In all probability they had pictured him to themselves as a poet à la Scudéri—a cavalier of agreeable presence, courtly manners and sprightly conversation. On the



contrary, they found before them a man of less than medium stature, dignified, indeed, by a fine intellectual countenance, but awkward in demeanor, inelegant in speech, slovenly in dress and somewhat morose in temper. Vigneul-Marville took him at first to be a tradesman, while a lady of high degree declared that, for his own sake, he should never be heard except at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Nor was he at pains to correct his defects. "I am not the less for that Pierre Corneille," he would say to those who ventured to hint at them. The self-contentment displayed in this remark frequently led him to recite at the Hôtel de Rambouillet some of the best scenes of his plays, although he must have seen that by doing so he fatigued rather than gratified his hearers. "Cadédis!" exclaimed Boisrobert, being reproached by Corneille for having decried one of his earlier pieces at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, "did I not applaud it when you blurted it out in my presence?" But much was forgiven the "grand Corneille," as from this time he seems to have been called. In addition to having written *Le Cid*, he was of good birth and education, and some of the butterflies among whom he moved may have been kind enough to suggest that the city in which he had passed his early days was as yet without the pale of Parisian influence. Had the tone aimed at in the salons been less artificial, the dramatist would doubtless have appeared in them to better advantage. Nothing like awkward constraint was apparent in his demeanor when he found himself among chosen friends, such as Rotrou and Pelisson. In a discussion with them his ungainliness disappeared; his dark eyes acquired a



new force of expression, and a brusque humor peculiar to himself gave point and pungency to what he said. It was easy at such times to perceive that to bluntness of manner and speech he united many high qualities—a humane disposition, a proudly independent spirit, a strong reverence for all that is really great and good. But his claim to honors became a matter of dispute. Every envious dramatist in the town endeavored to ridicule *Le Cid*, and, for their own sakes, to reverse the popular verdict.

His triumph assured, Corneille returned to Rouen, to be received there with pride and pleasure by his ennobled father, by the genial old M. de Chalons, by the demoiselle whose fickleness had caused him to turn his attention to the theatre, and by many of his fellow-citizens. The selection of subjects for his next plays must have cost him much anxious thought; for the eyes of France were upon him, and to realize the expectations he had raised, it was necessary to surpass his former works. His sympathies really lay with the picturesque scenes and characters of the middle ages, but it was more than probable that, if he utilized one of them, Scudéri and his tribe would accuse him of availing himself of a Spanish plot without acknowledgment. Anxious to prove that the invention of a plot was not above his capacity, he finally turned his attention to the history and legends of antiquity. In this well-trodden field he found several themes which, in addition to being susceptible of effective treatment, had not yet been touched by French dramatists—the contest between the Horatii and the Curiatii, the conspiracy of

Cinna against Augustus, the martyrdom of Polyeuctes and the death of Pompey. Nevertheless, he did not entirely abandon his Spanish studies.

### Successes and failures.

*The Cid* was followed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne by Rotrou's tragi-comedy, *Laure Persécutée*, in which a story akin to that of Inez de Castro is told with a force not previously displayed by his same pen. Even thus early, it would seem, the success of Corneille was tending to stimulate the ambition of his talented friend. Mairet, intimidated rather than spurred to fresh exertion, was represented by *L'Illustre Corsaire* and *Sidonie*, and Calprenède by a tragedy on the fate of the nine-days' queen, *Jeanne d'Angleterre*. Then came two untried dramatists—Guérin de Bouscal and Desfontaines, the latter a man of letters pure and simple. The former was less successful than the latter, though superior to him in art and taste. Tristan, anxious to confirm the advantage he had won by *Mariamne*, took to the Marais his tragedy of *Panthée*, the leading character of which had been written for Mondori. A cruel disappointment was in store for him. During a performance of *Herod*, Mondori was seized with apoplexy, and as symptoms of paralysis followed, the doctors ordered him to take a long rest. Tristan, too impatient to await the actor's recovery, transferred the chief part in *Panthée* to another member of the company, in whose hands it created so little effect that the play was a failure. Duryer contributed his *Lucrèce*,

which is valuable only as showing the degradation into which the drama sometimes fell at this period. Poignard in hand, Sextus attempts to execute his nefarious purpose; Lucrèce rushes away; her persecutor follows; faint cries are heard behind the scenes, and the heroine reappears with a significant speech in her mouth.

### Chevreau.

The vitality of *The Cid* was now to be illustrated in a manner which Corneille could not have approved. The salons had just discovered, as they thought, a youthful prodigy in the person of Urbain Chevreau, son of an advocate in Poitou. Not yet twenty-four years of age, he was versed in many languages, had thrown off poetry and romance, and was engaged upon nothing less than a history of the world. Even this task, however, was not so formidable as the one to which he now addressed himself. With amusing temerity and self-confidence, he produced *La Suite et le Mariage du Cid* as a continuation of Corneille's play. The Infanta, actuated by jealousy, opposes the union of the lovers, but Rodrigue, after being arrested on suspicion of daring to look with eyes of affection on that royal lady, becomes the husband of Chimène in reward for another victory gained over the Moors. To make things still more pleasant for the young couple, the princess becomes engaged to marry a king. Though the comparison with Corneille must have told severely against the play, it was several times repeated, the author bringing out two others, in one of which this

world's historian introduces Tarquin as a Roman emperor!

*Les Visionnaires.*

Soon afterward *L'Aveugle de Smyrne*, concocted by the Cinq Auteurs, was played at the Palais Cardinal, the interest being greatly increased by the appearance of Mondori as the hero. But this favorite actor broke down in the middle of the performance, and his part was finished by a substitute. In any event, it would not have succeeded, and, with *Les Tuileries*, served to show that the five poets, though all were good in their special line, could not work well together. Thereupon Richelieu determined that, in future, his plays should be written by a single dramatist, selecting for this purpose Desmarets. As the result, the comedy of *Les Visionnaires* was brought out at the hôtel de Bourgogne. Under a thin disguise, many prominent figures in French Society are brought on the stage, Madame de Sablé, for instance, who allowed the cardinal to believe that if she kept him at arm's length, her heart was really his, being introduced as a girl enamored of Alexander the Great. The comedy was received with a mixture of applause and derisive laughter, the latter predominating; for the public were in no kindly mood toward Desmarets, whom they termed "the first clerk in the department of poetic affairs at the Palais Cardinal."

After this failure, Richelieu took Scudéri under his patronage, ordering Sarrazin, one of the foremost of critics, to prepare an essay extolling him as the greatest

dramatic poet of the age. But a new tragi-comedy by Scudéri, entitled *L'Amour Tyranique*, met with only temporary success, for it was intrinsically worthless. Moreover, several productions of real merit appeared about the same time, especially Rotrou's *Captifs*, a clever imitation of Plautus. Above all, Corneille had again appeared on the stage, and strive as he would to influence fashion in favor of some other poet, Richelieu could not contend against public opinion.

### Corneille's *Horace*.

The first of the tragedies written by Corneille at Rouen was *Horace*, which was produced at the Hôtel de Bourgogne early in 1639. In vain did the hangers-on at the Palais Cardinal try to prevent, or at least to qualify, its success; their efforts were thrown away and they could not themselves resist the spell thrown over the audience by this masterpiece of tragic composition. Extremely impressive was the figure of the father of the Horatü, as acted by Bellerose, who seemed to concentrate in himself all the grandeur of the Roman character. Intensely pathetic is the struggle between love for his children and the feeling of patriotism to which it yields, and not less so the parting from his son and the affianced lover of his daughter, who were soon to meet in deadly strife. But the master-stroke was in the scene where, after cursing the son who had fled, as he thought, when his brothers were slain at the first encounter, the father is asked, "What would you have him do against three?" "Die!" he exclaims — "Qu'il

mourût"—these words being greeted with a thunder of applause such as had never been heard within the walls of the theatre. It is almost unnecessary to add that the success of *Horace* exceeded the highest expectations of the author and his friends, while Sarrazin's eulogy of Scudéri became the laughing-stock of Paris.

The first two scenes are taken up with complaints and wailings, for whichever side gains the victory, the result will be disastrous to the personages of the story. Sabina, an Alban woman by birth, but married to Horatius, a Roman, thus bitterly laments her fate:

*Sabina.*—I am Roman, alas! because Horatius is Roman; I received the title when I accepted his hand. But this tie would make me a slave indeed, if it shut out from my heart my own country. Alba, where I first saw the light of day—Alba, my first love, the place of my birth—when I see war break out between us and thee, I dread our victory, even as I dread our loss. And Rome, if thou upbraid'st me that I am treacherous to thy cause, let thy enemies be such as I can hate. When I see from thy walls their army and ours—my husband on this side, and my three brothers on that—how can I without impiety importune heaven for thy happiness?

Still addressing Rome, she continues:

*Sabina.*—Go push your successes in the East; go to the Rhine, and set your flag upon its banks. Let the columns of Hercules tremble at thy approach: but spare the town where Romulus was born. Recollect, ungrateful city, that thou owest thine own existence, thy walls, and thy first laws, to the blood of her kings. Alba is thy origin. Stay, therefore, and consider before thou drive thy sword into thy mother's breast.

To whichever side the victory falls, the defeat to her will be terrible. The conquerors will have no further obstacle to their ambition, and the vanquished will be without hope; and as for the unhappy Sabina, she will have only tears for the conquered, and for the conquerors hatred.

When she leaves the stage, Camilla, the sister of Horatius, appears in her place. Julia, a Roman lady, is the confidante both of Sabina and Camilla, and to her ear their pathetic lamentations on either side are addressed. Camilla, as well as Sabina, is in despair at the thought of the coming war. She, a daughter of Rome, is betrothed to Curiatius, one of the noblest sons of Alba, and her position is identical with that of Sabina, except that she is not yet actually married. Her three brothers are all in the Roman army, fighting against Alba, as the three brothers of Sabina are in the Alban army. Julia tells Camilla that her grief ought not to be so deep as that of Sabina, for she is not as yet married. "One may change one's lover," she says, "but not one's husband. Put Curiatius out of your mind, and think of Valerius. You will then have nothing to fear from the enemy. You will be altogether upon our side, and no longer troubled by anxious cares. The idea of breaking her faith with a man she loves is horrible to Camilla; she will not listen to it for a moment, and thus declares herself:

*Camilla.*—I met Valerius, and, against his wont, he displeased me not. He spoke to me of love, and I listened to him, not perceiving that it was he who spoke. I showed him neither coldness nor disdain. Curiatius seemed to stand be-



fore me. All that I heard told me of his love, and all that I said assured him of mine. But to-day everything hangs upon the hazards of the fight. When yesterday I learnt the news, I scarcely noted it; my heart, charmed with the thoughts of wedlock and of peace, cast off all fatal forebodings. Night has dispelled that sweet delusion; a thousand horrid visions, a thousand images of blood, or rather a thousand heaps of carnage and of slaughter, tore from me my joy, and brought back my tears. I saw blood, and the dead, and nothing more; each spectre, as it came before me, remained but for a moment. They crowded in one upon the other, and the confusion added a double terror to my dream.

After this description, Curiatius suddenly appears, and speaks to Camilla enigmatically of peace which is to be purchased by an expedient heretofore unthought of. He describes to her how two contending armies had been marshalled into position facing each other, ready for the signal of attack, when the Alban dictator came forward between them and proposed terms. The dictator described the misery that must follow a war in which members of the same family would be fighting against each other. Their common enemies, he says, are looking with satisfaction at the discord between them. Why should they weaken their forces by a civil war, in which the slaughter of the conquered would only weaken the conquerors? But if they must fight among themselves, let certain champions on each side be chosen, and let the issue be decided by them. The side which is proved to be weakest shall henceforward yield to the strongest. But no indignity shall be imposed; slavery shall not be inflicted, nor shall tribute be enacted. Curiatius tells Camilla that when the dictator

had spoken, each party rushed into the other's arms with many signs of joy. It was then determined to select three men from each side. The choice had not yet been made, but in two hours' time the chosen warriors should be prepared to fight.

At the commencement of the second act we learn that Horatius and his two brothers have been chosen on the side of Rome. Horatius and Curiatius appear on the stage together, and after a scene of mutual compliments, Flavianus, a soldier in the Alban army, comes in to announce that Curiatius and his two brothers have been chosen to fight on the side of Alba. He takes his leave, and the two chosen warriors are again left alone together. There is a moment in which the two champions stand aghast, as if a gulf had suddenly opened between them. Then Curiatius gives vent to the first wild horror of dismay in broken exclamations which finely express the confusion of a mind suddenly overwhelmed by a terrible and unalterable fate:

*Curiatius.*—From this time forth let heaven, and hell, and earth unite their rage against us! Let men, gods, demons, and fate herself, combine to do their worst. Their utmost cruelty, their most dread enmity, are less terrible than the honor thus vouchsafed us.

Horatius is more self-possessed. He reminds his friend that the distinction is one of which they ought to be proud. But Curiatius continues:

True it is that our names can never die; the opportunity is noble, and we should cherish it. We shall be mirrors

of a rare virtue: but yet your heroism has something savage in it; few even of the noblest would wish to seek immortality by such a path. However dear we hold this bubble reputation, obscurity is better than such honor. As for me, I dare say, and you can testify, that I have never hesitated to follow my duty. Not our friendship, our love, or the ties that bind us, could for a moment make my mind waver. And as Alba shows by this choice that she holds us in as high esteem as Rome holds you, so shall I fight for her as you for Rome; my heart is as stout as yours. But I still am human. I see that your honor demands of me my blood; I see that mine requires your death. Betrothed to the sister, I must kill the brother; so hard a fate must we encounter for our country's sake. Still, though I fly fearless to accomplish my duty, my heart recoils from it, and I shudder with horror. I mourn my lot, and look with envy on those whom battle has already bereft of life; yet without any wish to draw back. This great and sad honor touches my heart, but changes me not. I hold dear what it gives, but mourn for what it takes away. If Rome asks a higher virtue, I thank the gods that I am no Roman, that I am still permitted to feel as a man.

Horatius answers him:

If you are no Roman, show yourself worthy to be one: if you are my equal, prove it. The unshrinking courage of which I boast admits no weakness. It is not fit that honor should look behind her as she enters the lists. Great is our misfortune—none can be greater; but I face it, and do not tremble. Let our country send me against whom she will, with joy I blindly accept the post offered to me; the glory of receiving such a trust should stifle all other sentiments. He who, setting out in his country's service, thinks of aught else, is ill prepared to do his duty; this hallowed and sacred law breaks every other tie. Rome has made choice of my arm; that is enough for me. As with full and sincere gladness I married the sister, so do I combat the brother. But enough of futile speech; Alba has chosen you—I know you no more.

*Curatius.*—Alas! I know you still, and this thought it is

**that kills me: it is your harsh virtue alone that is unknown to me.**

Camilla then enters, and Horatius endeavors to embolden her:

Arm yourself with courage, and prove yourself my sister. If I fall by your lover's hand, receive him not as your brother's murderer, but as a man of honor who has done his duty, who has served his country, and proved himself worthy of you. Fulfill your marriage vows as though I were yet alive. But if it be my sword that cuts short his life, receive me victorious in the same spirit, and do not reproach me for your lover's death.

When Camilla is left alone with her lover, she tries to soften his heart, and entreats him to abandon this fearful contest. He has already, she says, done enough for his country. No name is more illustrious than his, and no fresh laurels can add to his glory. If he will remain with her she will not despise him, but will love him the more, because he has been untrue to his country for her sake. But though his heart revolts as much as hers from the terrible strife, not all her entreaties can persuade him to sacrifice his honor by refusing to fight for his country. Alba has committed her fate into his hands, and he must render her an account of his deeds; he must live without reproach, or else die without shame.

This tragic discussion is then varied by the re-entrance of Horatius, accompanied by his wife Sabina. "What!" cries Curiatius, "is not Camilla enough to distract my heart? must you too join your tears to hers,

my sister?" But Sabina's despair is beyond tears or entreaties. She has but one wild prayer to make to the combatants. If either one or the other shrank from this glorious misery, she would disown them as brother or as husband; the expedient she suggests to make their fight less unnatural is the very utterance of despair. "Buy by my death the right to hate each other," she cries. "Alba so wills it, and Rome: they must be obeyed." She is the only link between them. Let one of them kill her, and the other avenge her death. After this there will be nothing strange in their conflict; they will be each other's natural enemies.

Sabina's impassioned appeal brings the terrible situation to its climax; for distracted love and misery can go no further. The scene is interrupted by the sudden entrance of the elder Horatius. The two heroes had been almost overwhelmed by the appeals of the women. "My wife!" "My sister!" they exclaim, touched to the heart. "Courage! they are melting," cries poor Camilla; when the father's entrance ends all her hopes.

*The Elder Horatius.*—What is this, my sons? Talk you of love? lose you still your time with women? It is yours to shed your blood, not to think of their tears. Fly! leave them to bewail their miseries. Their complaints have too much power over you; they will make you weak as themselves. Such blows can only be escaped by fight.

The six warriors then prepare themselves for the combat; but as they are standing ready to fight, the people, horrified by the terrible character of the conflict, interpose to prevent it. Tullus Hostilius, the king, appeases

their sudden excitement by ordering the champions to lay down their arms until the oracles have been consulted. But this delay only prolongs the suffering of the unhappy women, through whose hopes and fears the story is here carried on, and who are imprisoned in their house lest they should interrupt the fray.

At length the old Horatius brings them the news that the gods have declined to stay the battle, and that their brothers are at that moment fighting. In the next scene Julia enters to announce that Rome has been beaten. The three Curiatii are yet alive; two of the Horatii have been killed, and the survivor, Sabina's husband, has saved himself by flight. The old Horatius will not at first believe that his son should have turned his back on the enemy. Julia knows nothing further, for her heart failed her when Horatius took flight. The old man does not heed her last sentence, and exclaims: "Did not our soldiers tear him in pieces? Did they admit the coward into their ranks?" Camilla's cry of sorrow here breaks in, and is arrested by the stern despair of the father:

*Camilla.*—My brothers!

*The Old Horatius.*— Weep them not, weep them not all!

As two have fallen, their sire would proudly fall.  
Let noblest garlands deck their funeral stones,  
The glory of their death for all atones.  
This joy their souls unconquered have possessed,  
That while they lived, Rome was with freedom blest;  
Ne'er have they seen a foreign prince obeyed,  
Nor their imperial land a province made.  
But weep the other! weep the fatal stain  
Thrown by his shameful flight upon our fame;

Weep the dishonor of our house renowned,  
Th' eternal shame on each Horatius bound.

*Julia*.—What would you he had done 'gainst such odds?

*The Old Horatius*.—

Die!

Or on sublime despair for aid rely.  
Had he a moment longer held the field,  
A moment less Rome had been forced to yield,  
And honor on my hoary head retained,  
By his life's payment had been nobly gained.  
Yet must he reckon for his blood with Rome,  
Each drop that's spared takes glory from his home;  
Each instant that he lives, after this crime,  
Prolongs his shame, and with his infamy mine.  
My hand must stop his course; a father's rage,  
Using 'gainst worthless son the rights of age,  
Must prove by the prompt vengeance of his shame,  
How such a deed is alien to my name.

Sabina tries to console her father-in-law, but he will listen to no words of comfort, upbraiding her rather that, as her brothers and her husband all live, she has no share in his misery. The next act begins with Camilla's equally vain intercessions for her brother, when Valerius enters, sent by the king to the old Horatius to express sympathy for his sorrow. The real end of the combat is then for the first time revealed. The old Horatius perceives there is something he does not understand, and when Valerius tells him that he has only heard one-half of the story, he brightens up suddenly and exclaims, "What! Rome is then triumphant?" Valerius then relates to him the complete circumstances of the battle. After such a victory there will be no Roman who would not be proud to win the hand of the sister of the deliverer of their country; and he implores



her to show her brother when he returns that they are both of the same blood. But Camilla's misery is not to be vanquished so easily. It is not enough, she moans, that her lover is killed, and that his rival has brought the news, but she is expected in addition to kiss the hand that has pierced his heart. When Horatius enters with his squire, bearing the swords of the three Curiatii, her misery bursts forth without bounds:

*Camilla.*—Restore my Curiatius or leave me to weep; my joy and my sorrow depend on his lot; I adored him living, and I mourn him dead. Think not to find your sister as you left her. You now see in me only an injured woman who will track your steps like a fury, and at every instant reproach you with his death. Tiger, thirsting for blood, that forbidd'st my tears, and would have me rejoice in his death and sound thy praise to the skies, thus slaying him a second time!—may so many misfortunes accompany thy life that thou may'st envy even me.

Horatius, amazed, reproaches her with being unfaithful to Rome, on which Camilla bursts forth into impassioned denunciation of the cruel city: "Rome, where you were born and which you worship,—Rome, which I hate because she honors you!" She prays that all nations from the East and from the West may rise up against her:

*Camilla.*—May the anger of heaven, lifted by my prayers, rain fire upon her. May I see with my own eyes that tempest fall, her houses in ashes, her laurels in dust!—see the last Roman at his last gasp, and I, the cause of it, die of pleasure!

This is more than Horatius can bear. He had that day fought for his country, and he will not suffer his

sister to utter such imprecations. He draws his sword, rushes after her as she flees, and kills her behind the scene. Such a deed could not be committed on the stage, following the precept of the poet Horace :

“Let not Medea with unnatural rage  
Slaughter her mangled infants on the stage.”

All such lessons coming down from the classics were as gospel to the French dramatists.

The fifth act brings the tragedy to a climax. Horatius is here put on his defense for the death of his sister. The old Horatius tells his son that though Camilla's fault was great, he was wrong so to punish her. The son answers that his life is in his father's hands, who has full power to take it from him, if it may so please him. Then the king enters with Valerius on a visit of condolence and inquiry, bewailing the new blow, which he fears the old man will find it hard to bear. Valerius, who had loved Camilla, then stands forth and appeals to the king for the punishment of Horatius. Who can be safe, he asks, among the Roman people, who have so many ties with the neighboring nations, if a bride is slain for weeping the death of her bridegroom because he died in battle against Rome? Horatius does not attempt to defend himself. He is willing to die, but prays the king that his death may be an honorable one, and that his name shall not be held up to public reproach.

The scene, which has already assumed the solemnity of a trial, acquires a still deeper interest when Sabina enters. Her despair is of a character very different from that of Camilla, and there is a sombre grandeur about

her, both in this scene and in the previous one, when she offers her life to her husband and brother. Again her entreaty is that her life may be accepted instead of that of Horatius. What has she to live for? she asks. "Sire, behold my misery and the condition to which I am reduced. What horror to embrace a man whose sword has destroyed my entire race! And what wickedness to hate a husband for having nobly served his country, his people and you!" After the wife has thus spoken, the father is heard for his son. Horatius is pardoned. He has lessened his glory by a crime committed in the very moment of victory; but his offense is more than outweighed by the service he has rendered to his country.

#### Richelieu's *Mirame*.

Richelieu would not give up the fight, notwithstanding that *Horace* was dedicated to him as a peace-offering. He at once began sounding the praises of a tragic-comedy entitled *Mirame*, of which Desmarets was the reputed author, though probably written in part by the cardinal himself. For its representation he converted into a theatre a chamber of his palace large enough to hold six thousand spectators, providing the finest of stage machinery and decorations, including some of the tallest oaks from the forest of Bourdonnais, at an expense of a hundred thousand crowns. The play was acted before an audience selected by his eminence, who was by far the most interested spectator, his stern features lighting up at every murmur of applause, though, anxious that no line should be lost, he would lean forward from his

box to restore silence. The demonstration which followed the fall of the curtain was evidently insincere, for the piece had little to commend it except its mounting. "Alas!" exclaimed Richelieu, "the French will never learn true taste." "Monseigneur," said one of his flatterers, "the fault lies not with the play, which is really admirable, but with the players, who were half-drunk and did not know their parts." "Yes," replied the cardinal, "they all acted in a most pitiable style." A second performance was more favorably received, but *Mirame* never gained a permanent foothold on the stage.

### Corneille's Cinna.

Corneille's *Horace* was followed by *Cinna*, based on a passage from Seneca, but with many original incidents and personages. In majesty of sentiment and language it surpassed any of the former works of the great dramatist, winning the admiration even of the Scudérists. Especially fine is the opening of the second act, where Cinna urges Augustus to restore the liberties of Rome. Finding that Cinna, whom he has trained with paternal care, is engaged in a conspiracy against his life, Augustus summons him into his presence, reminds him of his obligations, tells him that the plot has been discovered, and, as the spectators are trembling for his fate—pardons him. Such magnanimous clemency, free from any suspicion of prudential motives, created a profound sensation, affecting to tears many of the spectators, including the great Condé, then fifty years of age. Moreover, the complexion of the times was eminently favorable to

the success of a play which, like *Cinna*, abounded in generous sentiments; for the extension of regal authority was a general subject of discussion, and the spirit of faction was everywhere abroad.

### Richelieu Befriends Corneille.

At length Richelieu became convinced that he could neither suppress the popularity of Corneille nor prevent it from steadily increasing with every fresh production. Hence he determined to establish an *entente cordiale* with the poet, hoping to bring him under the influence of the court, and perhaps to gather a reflected glory from his works. Whatever his reasons, he now made friendly overtures to the man whom, five years before, he had treated as a back, and whose progress he had vainly attempted to impede. The overtures were timely and well received; for the wolf was now at the poet's door. His father had died in straitened circumstances, leaving to him the burden of the family's support, for which his means were entirely inadequate.

Soon afterward Richelieu conferred on the dramatist an obligation which made him his life-long friend. Notwithstanding his poverty, Corneille was in love with and loved by Marie de Lamperrière, daughter of a lieutenant-general who lived within a day's journey of Rouen. But the young lady's father, being unable to provide her with a dowry, and knowing that her suitor was poor, refused to sanction their marriage, and insisted that the match be broken off. Corneille, who was now engaged upon his *Polyeucte*, took the disappoint-

ment sorely to heart. The pen dropped from his hand, and he felt that his occupation was gone. The pleasant visions which had nerved him to put forth his strongest efforts were dispelled, for before he could secure a competence his beloved would be the wife of another. In this frame of mind he called, one day, at the Palais, where Richelieu asked him what progress he was making with his play. "None," was the reply; "my mind is too much disturbed to permit me to work." In answer to the cardinal's inquiry, he then told him the whole story. "Is that all?" said the minister, with provoking calmness; "well, your troubles will soon be over." Thereupon he summoned the lieutenant-general to the palace, signified his pleasure in the matter, to which the other readily acquiesced, and Marie de Lamperière became Madame Corneille.

### Polyeucte.

Within a few weeks *Polyeucte* was ready for the stage, and never was that ancient legend turned to better account. Pauline, daughter of Félix, a Roman patrician, follows him to Armenia, where, in obedience to his commands, she consents to wed Polyeucte, a descendant of an Armenian king. Her affections, however, belong to Sévère, a high-souled Roman citizen, but too poor to find favor in her father's eyes. Appointed general by the Emperor Decius, he follows Pauline to claim her as his bride, but finds her already married. Polyeucte now turns Christian, and for overturning the idols in a temple, during a solemn sacri-

fiée, is condemned to death. The sentence executed, Pauline would have been at liberty to accept the hand of Sévère, but her duty as a wife prevails over all other considerations. She strives to obtain his pardon and to induce her husband to purchase life by renouncing his new faith, her efforts being nobly seconded by Sévère. But all is in vain; Polyeucte suffers martyrdom; Pauline, hoping soon to join him, herself turns Christian, and is followed by her father, while Sévère, instead of persecuting them, appears as the incarnation of the spirit of religious tolerance. The story is told with all the beauty of language and wealth of ideas that marked the former works of Corneille. The religious zeal of Polyeucte, the unselfish devotion of his wife, the self-abnegation of Sévère, each forms an exquisite picture, in contrast with which are the darker shades of character assigned to Félix.

With all its merits, the tragedy was at first rejected by the Hôtel de Bourgogne, being returned to the author on account of the nature of its subject. The actors could see in it only the martyr, Pauline, the finest character yet delineated by Corneille, attracting little attention. At the Hôtel de Rambouillet, where it was read by the author before one of the most fashionable audiences in Paris, it was highly praised as a composition, but condemned for its so-called "Christianisms." At one time Corneille had resolved to withdraw it, but at length, after remaining, as it is said, for eighteen months on the canopy of a bedstead, it was put in rehearsal. The result was a genuine triumph. *Polyeucte* was hailed by the public as the



poet's chef d'œuvre, and in this, as in other instances, the verdict of posterity was anticipated. Corneille was so elated that he asked permission, through the duke of Schomberg, to dedicate his tragedy to the king, but without expecting a pecuniary reward. "No, no; it is unnecessary," exclaimed Louis, who was then in one of his parsimonious moods. "Sire," answered the duke, "it is not from interested motives that Corneille seeks this honor." "In that case," said the monarch, "he will do me a pleasure."

#### Gilbert and la Serre.

About this time appeared a brace of new aspirants, who attracted some attention. The first was Gabriel Gilbert, who aspired to literary honors of all kinds, and if these were to be gained by more industry, would doubtless have won them; but he wrote too much to write well, and was more fortunate in his choice of subjects than in handling them. His first production was *Marguerite de France*, in which one of the characters was Henry II of England. The other new dramatist was Jean Puget de la Serre, in whose *Thomas Morus*, a tragedy in prose, he introduces Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, ascribing to the latter about all the virtues that woman can possess. The drama met with marked success; the entire court sang its praises; Richelieu wept over the sorrows of the heroine, and so great was the throng of spectators that, on one occasion, four doorkeepers were crushed to death. "Voilà," exclaimed the author, referring to this incident, "Corneille has no such proof of the suc-

cess of his plays, and I shall not acknowledge him as my superior until he has five doorkeepers killed in one day."

The next of Corneille's tragedies was *La Mort de Pompée*, as to the reception of which the author had no reason to complain. The events leading up to the death of Pompey are dramatized with remarkable skill and force; in *Cornélie* the energy of the Roman character is again shadowed forth, and Cæsar, except when he is making love, is all that history represents. Pompey himself does not appear, but the greatest interest is awakened in his behalf. The chief defect of the play was aptly pointed out by one who said that there were too many heroes among the personages, and that consequently the impression made by each was not so distinct and vivid as it might have been.

The state now for the first time took measures to maintain the high tone which the drama had acquired, and to relieve the players from the stigma which the church had cast upon them. Louis the XIII, or rather Richelieu, issued an order forbidding players, on pain of being declared infâme and subjected to other punishments, to give indelicate scenes or to use improper expressions. If the players so regulated their work as to render it altogether exempt from impurity, the king desired that their calling should not expose them to blame or prejudice their reputation in public intercourse. By this edict the social status of the actors was materially raised, and the self-respect which spread among them was in itself a guarantee that the object would be achieved. It may be added that the cardinal

would have been more consistent, if, going a step further, he had exerted his influence at Rome to restore the rights of the communion and the hallowed burial to the followers of an art which he, a member of the sacred college, had so often patronized, and in which he had striven to become conspicuous.

### The Liar.

Inspired by the respect thus accorded to their long-condemned profession, the troupe of the Hôtel de Bourgogne addressed themselves with ardor to their work, though meeting only with reverses until, in 1642, appeared Corneille's adaptation of *La Verdad Sospechosa*, soon shortened into *Le Menteur*; or, *The Liar*. It was somewhat of a surprise as well as a success. Thus far, the importance of character in comedy had not been sufficiently recognized, and the main object of the author had been to weave an exciting intrigue. *Le Menteur* relied in a great measure upon the effect of a special idiosyncrasy; for the mendacity of Dorante forms the chief interest, and upon it the whole play turns. The plot, also, is excellent, so much so that Corneille said he would have parted with his two best tragedies for the honor of having invented it. In order to heighten the effect of the performance, Richelieu gave Belrose a superb uniform in which to play Dorante, whereupon the second actor, fearing he would not attract his share of attention, greatly exaggerated his part. Nevertheless, the play was regarded as a masterpiece of comic art, and its success encouraged

Corneille to write a rather tame continuation under the title of *La Suite du Menteur*.

### Europe.

Richelieu continued to devote most of his spare time to stage work. In conjunction with Desmarets, his ever-faithful "minister for poetic affairs," he wrote a comedy in which the powers of Europe are personified, and which, as may be supposed, dwelt much on the greatness attained by France under his administration. The play was sent to the academy with a note requesting them to alter the dialogue as they thought fit. The members examined *Europe*—for that was the name of the piece—in a severely critical spirit, and in every page they made omissions, or what they considered other improvements. The manuscript was so full of alterations that the cardinal tore it up, but recovering from his anger, pieced the fragments together, removed all but a few minor corrections, and returned it to the academicians. "Tell them," he said to Boisrobert, "that in profiting by their suggestions I have not adopted them all, as nobody is proof against errors of judgment." Learning that he resented their boldness, the members wisely sent back the manuscript to Richelieu as it had last left his hands, stating that in its present condition it had received their unanimous approval. *Europe* then appeared at the Hôtel de Bourgogne as the work of Desmarets. Its fate was like that of other politico-allegorical plays, without either plot or wit. Its failure was so complete that when one of

the actors came forward at the fall of the curtain to announce a second performance, the pit, unconsciously stinging the minister to the quick, demanded that *The Cid* should be given instead. It would be impossible to realize the vexation thus caused to the great ruler; but the fiasco had at least one good effect; Richelieu never wrote any more dramas.

### Death of Richelieu.

The career of the great cardinal was now drawing to a close, for he died before the end of the year. Having succeeded in all his projects except that of destroying Corneille's reputation as a dramatist, his connection with the drama revealed the weakest side of his character. Yet it should be remembered that the annoyance caused by the triumph of *Le Cid* and *Horace* never caused him to withdraw the pension awarded to the author, and that after their reconciliation he seems to have done his best to make atonement. Being asked to compose a few lines of verse in honor of the cardinal's memory, Corneille wrote an epitaph which was none too complimentary, for he had never quite forgiven his slights, though he had forgotten, it would seem, that through his intercession he had gained the hand of Marie de Lamperière. Corneille probably stood alone among dramatists and actors in this lukewarmness of sentiment, for they could not forget that Richelieu had given them much encouragement, to say nothing of more substantial assistance, that he had treated them as artists, invited them to his table and

formally declared their vocation to be worthy of respect.

### Corneille's Influence on the Drama.

The death of Richelieu marks the close of an important era in the history of the stage. By the irony of fate, the lustre of his administration had been greatly enhanced by the gifts of him whom he had done his best to disparage. In Corneille's four last tragedies, it will be seen, the principle underlying *The Cid* had been closely adhered to. *Horace* exhibits the virtues of the patriot, *Cinna* of clemency, *Polyeucte* of Christian faith, and *Pompey* of conjugal affection. Each of these superb compositions had justified or augmented the fame of the author, for each had served to reveal his genius in a stronger, though not in a more attractive, light than *The Cid*. It is probable that the genius of Corneille reached its full height in *Polyeucte*—in the portraiture of the wife who, sustained by moral energy and a sense of duty, wrestles with and subdues a passion which forms a part of her being. It may also be remarked that the limits set to his powers were now increasingly apparent; the softer and lighter feelings find no mirror in his page, and his heroines, the "adorable furies," as Balzac calls them, have a more or less masculine aspect. Play-goers must have remarked how narrow was the sphere of the dramatist, though the grandeur and beauty of his work had by this time given it supreme authority as a model; so that nearly every writer thought it necessary to observe the unities and to portray the sterner rather than the softer passions.

### III.

#### Corneille, Scarron, and their Contemporaries.

The supremacy attained by Corneille in both tragedy and comedy was shown by his contemporaries in opposite ways, most of them yielding to the influence of his example, while others, with mortified vanity, closed their connection with the theatre. Among the latter were Mairet, Benserade, Scudéri and Calprenède. The first, whose *Sophonisbe* had done much to aid the classic drama, gave himself up to study, except when employed by the queen on important missions. Benserade, gaining a foothold at the Louvre, devoted himself to the composition of court ballets, in which he adroitly introduced many personages of note. Scudéri's secession was not entirely due to a sense of his littleness in comparison with the poet to whom he had been brought forward as a rival. Educated in the school of Hardi, he chafed against the strict laws of the classicists and the rigor with which they were now upheld. True, he was in no position to despise the earnings of his profession; but he was aided in money matters by the phenomenal success of his sister as a writer of romance. He became governor of a fortress at Marseilles, a post



which demanded so little of his time that it was said he travelled to Marseilles with his sister by coach, heard a salute of ten guns fired in his honor, locked up the fort, put the key in his pocket and set forth the same day on his return to Paris. He fought with the utmost bravery in Condé's early campaigns, and identifying his fortunes with those of the general, became embroiled with the government and was exiled from Paris. During the banishment he won the heart and hand of a young heiress, Mdlle. de Martin Vost, and thenceforth lived in Normandy in the style of a grand seigneur. His plays often show considerable talent and might have kept alive the romantic drama, at least for a time, had it not been for carelessness in their production. Calprenède gathered new laurels in the field of romance, and Chevreau, it may be added, completed his history of the world while acting as secretary to high and titled personages. By these desertions the theatres, of course, suffered appreciably, but others filled their places, while Rotrou and Duryer further distinguished themselves, the latter in a tragedy based on the story of Esther, in which there was no small degree of beauty and strength.

One by one the players who had been associated with the early triumphs of Corneille disappeared from the stage. Mondori died at Orleans, never having recovered from the paralysis with which he was smitten while acting at the Palais Cardinal, and in him was lost the first of a long line of great tragic actors. Bellerose was compelled by some painful malady to abandon the profession in which he had held the highest rank for

many years. In their selection of a successor the company was extremely fortunate, for he was one of those whose name the world will not readily let die.

### Gifted Actors.

The Théâtre du Marais had recently acquired a talented actor in the person of Josias de Soulas, known to play-goers as Floridor. A German by birth, after serving in the French army he became a strolling player, but in his thirtieth year was a manager as well as an actor of established repute. Emerging from obscurity at a single bound, he came to the Théâtre du Marais, officiated there as "orator," and on the retirement of Bellerose was elected to fill his place. Every gift required by an actor, it is said, was possessed by Floridor—ardent feeling, trained judgment, fine presence, graceful manners and a musical and elastic voice. He was equally good in both branches of the drama, while the training he had received in elocution gave him an advantage over his predecessor. About the same time other players were added to the troupe, first among whom was Michel Boyron, son of a mercer in a country town. Delighted with the antics of a strolling company at Bourges, whither his father had sent him on business, he immediately joined them, and his success proved that he had not made a mistake. He excelled equally as a hero, prince or lover, and before long became known as the *Sieur Baron*, for such was the name that Louis XIII bestowed on him after a performance at court. His wife was also employed at

the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where, with her abilities and personal attractions, few characters came amiss.

### *Rodogune.*

Floridor waited for more than a year before an original and effective character fell to his lot, though, meanwhile, many novelties had been produced, among them the tragedy of *Rodogune*, of which Gilbert was the reputed, but not the real author. Corneille had already written four acts of a drama of that name, dealing with the heroism of fraternal affection, and of this play, so far as written, a person in his confidence, either from treachery or indiscretion, gave a minute description to Gilbert, who forthwith wrote a play bearing a close resemblance to the other in plot, situation, and even in speeches. The plagiarist made but a clumsy use of his materials; he enfeebled the interest of the plot, confounded one character with another and piled his own cumbersome verbiage on Corneille's beauties of thought and language, until they were all but lost to sight. Moreover, the fifth act, for which he had to rely upon himself, formed a most lame and impotent conclusion. Of course, the piece fell flat, for its borrowed charms, instead of serving to redeem its dullness only made that dullness more conspicuous.

Corneille now found himself in an embarrassing position. By producing his own *Rodogune* he would allow the public to suppose that he had borrowed from Gilbert at least the plot and the dramatis personæ, unless he exposed his friend to the charge of plagiar-

ism by revealing the real state of the case. In the end, with rare moral courage, he ordered his tragedy to be played, with Floridor as the hero, and preserved absolute silence as to the wrong inflicted upon him. It would be clear that one of the plays was modelled upon the other, and he wisely relied upon his own superior strength. His *Rodogune* was a decided success, and if it did not quite reach the level of *Polyeucte*, it abounded in dramatic effect, and contained more of the element of intrigue than the author had previously shown. The character of *Cléopâtre*, queen of Syria, is one of the most terrible ever created for the stage, and the fifth act, in which Gilbert had cut so sorry a figure, may well have fascinated the most apathetic spectator.

### Jodelet.

Another novelty which appeared about this time at the Hôtel de Bourgogne is deserving of attention, and this is the *Jodelet, ou le Maître Valet*, a broad comedy in five acts, by Paul Scarron. As yet, the value of dialogue, except in tragedy, had not been fully realized, and it was chiefly by means of character and incident that the approval of the audience was sought. *Jodelet* was written on entirely different principles. Without strongly marked characters, and having only the interest of a commonplace love intrigue at Madrid, in which a valet passes himself off as the master, it relies almost exclusively on verbal pleasantry, on a rapid succession of quips and cranks often filled with wit and gayety. It proved an instant success, especially as Jodelet did

ample justice to the good things assigned to his part. In substance the play belonged to the pre-Corneille school of comedy, and was received by dramatic authors with perfect willingness to profit by the lesson it conveyed. Henceforth dialogue became a prominent feature, sometimes, indeed, too prominent, in the lighter form of drama.

### Paul Scarron.

Scarron was, as the complexion of his work would suggest, a joyous devil-may-care, in spite of circumstances which might have soured the finest temper and disposition. He was born in Paris about 1610, his father being an opulent conseiller au Parlement. In his youth a dark cloud came over his worldly prospects. Madame Scarron died; the conseiller married again, and the second wife, having two children herself, exerted her influence over her husband—"the best of men," Scarron once remarked, "but not the best of fathers"—to the detriment of the issue of the first marriage. Incapable of dissimulation, young Scarron had the temerity to upbraid his stepmother for her self-seeking, which raised so great a storm in the household that the conseiller found it expedient to send him away from home. During his exile he passed some months in Italy, returning with a lively admiration of the peculiar farce invented in that country. Though distinguished by a love of wild frolic and a turn for drollery which prevented him from putting two serious ideas together, at the instance of his father, who seems to have had a curious notion of what was due to the ecclesiastical state, he took the petit-

collet. The result was precisely what might have been anticipated. He gave himself up with but little reservation to riotous living. In more than one mad freak which startled Paris from its propriety he was the leading spirit.

His connection with the church, however, did not last beyond his thirty-fourth year. As the story goes, in the course of a carnival at Mans, whither he had been sent to act as canon, he stripped himself to the skin, smeared himself from top to toe with honey, rolled himself on a heap of light feathers until he was thickly covered with them, and then, accompanied by two boon companions similarly attired, started on a tour of the town. On one of the bridges they were stopped and closely surrounded by a swarm of merry-makers, who thought it an excellent joke to pick the feathers from their faces. No sooner was Scarron recognized than the crowd assumed a menacing aspect. In the escapade of the abbé they saw only a deep affront to religion; and some of their number, regardless of the divinity that hedges the priesthood, proceeded to belabor him with right good-will. In this extremity, the feathered bipeds, disengaging themselves from their assailants, jumped over the bridge—long afterward denominated the pont de Scarron—and sought a refuge among the rushes of the Sarthe. The canon got away in safety, but his friends were drowned. It would have been a mercy to Scarron if he had shared their fate. The chill of the immersion, acting upon a system already enfeebled by an ill-regulated life, struck to his very bones; rheumatism in its worst form supervened, and in a few months we find him paralyzed be-

yond hope of cure—"an epitome," as he himself said, "of human misery."

Scarron's bodily affliction, however, neither impaired his mind nor depressed his spirits. Temporarily expelled from the church, and almost entirely dependent upon himself for the means of a livelihood, he became a man of letters. His pen was at first employed in the service of the theatre; for the actors paid what in those days was regarded as a good price for a play, and to him such work was both congenial and easy. The gayety and humor thrown into his writings were still characteristic of the man. Bent almost double in an invalid's chair, with his head bowed on his chest, and with an expression of pain frequently darkening his face, he would keep his hearers in a roar by the drollest of talk. In front of his chair were a desk and writing materials. His fame as a wit having spread abroad, his domicile soon became the resort of the liveliest company in Paris, and for a time eclipsed the glory of the Hôtel de Rambouillet itself. Corneille, Saint-Evremond, Sarrazin, Chapelle, Voiture, Calprenède, Scudéri, Benserade—all these were to be looked for there. Nor, as may be supposed, was the fair sex excluded. In the group at the abbé's we find Mdlle. de Scudéri, who has just completed another ponderous romance; Ninon de l'Enclos, who drives away ennui by regularly changing her lover with the new moon; Marion Delorme, who is now an object of adoration to young abbés instead of old cardinals; and the comtesse de Suze, who has forsaken the religion of her fathers in the hope that she may not see her husband again, either in this world or the next. Scarron's earn-



ings were not equal to his expenses, but it is probable that he received some pecuniary assistance from his father, and before long a pension was given to him by Anne of Austria, in testimony of the delight his writings afforded her.

### *Zénobie.*

Less successful than Scarron's works was a carefully written tragedy by a new dramatist of some distinction in other fields of literature. The eldest son of a lieutenant-general, François Hédelin began life as an advocate, but soon afterward devoted himself to the church, and becoming tutor to Richelieu's nephew, the duke of Fronsac, was appointed, for his faithful services, Abbé d'Aubignac. Most of his time, however, was devoted to letters, especially dramatic criticism, which he wrote in so captious a spirit that those whom he criticised feared and hated him. Such a man, it was clear, should not himself have run unadvisedly the gauntlet of criticism, but the abbé's vanity was greater than his prudence. On the introduction of his *Zénobie*, a prose tragedy which had found favor with the actors, his victims did not fail to turn against him the weapon he had placed in their hands. In full force, and backed by all their friends, they attended the first representation with a firm resolve that it should also be the last. They laughed at every fine speech, roared outright at a scene which the author intended to be especially impressive, and declared not altogether without justice, that *Zénobie* exhibited all the shortcomings with which the abbé had reproached his brother dramatists. Over-

awed by this expression of hostility, the company abandoned the play, and the court heaped fresh coals of fire on the abbé's head. The latter had boasted, on one occasion, that he was the only dramatist who had faithfully observed the precepts of Aristotle. "M. l'Abbé," said the prince de Condé, "you are not to be blamed for doing so, but I can never forgive Aristotle for involving you in so great a disaster."

### **Théodore.**

But the abbé was not without consolation. Even Corneille, of whom he had spoken with due respect, was not proof against failure. His *Théodore Vierge et Martyre*, the chief novelty of the autumn, had but a brief existence, and the author frankly admitted that its condemnation was deserved. "Such a piece," he writes, "is nothing but a body without legs or arms, and consequently without action. I should be wrong to oppose the decision of a public to whom I owe so much." The versification is often slovenly and seldom worthy of the author. Two of the worst lines being quoted to Fontenelle, his nephew and biographer, he asked who could have spoiled paper with such stuff as that. "Your dear uncle, the great Corneille," was the unexpected reply.

Among others who came forward in 1645 were Rotrou, Guérin de Bouscal, Douville, and Michel Leclerc, the last a young advocate who wrote a single tragedy of considerable merit, entitled *Virginie Romaine*, and then had sense enough to return to his pro-

fession. Less sensible was another advocate of dramatic proclivities, named Jean Magnon, who, after several failures, was prompted by his morbid vanity to persevere, hoping against hope. By a mere accident, however, he gained a passing notoriety, for his *Artaxerxe* was played by a company of amateurs, among whom was Jean Baptiste Poquelin, destined to become famous on the Parisian stage.

### Héraclius.

The author of *The Cid* fully justified Rotrou's encomium by his *Héraclius*, which, if it did not reach the level of his best work, displayed a force peculiarly his own. The source of the play has been a subject of controversy, the most striking incidents resembling those in a drama of Calderon, while the question arises, who was first in the field. The balance of evidence shows that Calderon's plot was borrowed from *Héraclius*, and such in effect is the statement of Corneille himself, whose veracity there is no reason to doubt, especially at a time when the Spanish drama was studied by almost every playwright in Paris. Be this as it may, *Héraclius* was a decided success, notwithstanding the defect of an over-complicated plot.

Almost at the same time a drama of hardly inferior merit was produced at the Bourgogne. It was the *Venceslas* of Rotrou, whose passion for gambling had caused him to be arrested for debt. To secure his release he offered to sell the play for twenty pistoles in cash, and it was at once accepted. Seldom had a more

impressive story been fitted for the stage, though in fact it was merely a translation of one by Francisco de Roxas, with only such alterations as would suit it to the tastes of Parisians.

### Thomas Corneille.

Among the new dramatists of this period was Thomas Corneille, a brother of Pierre. Some twenty years younger than the latter, he had studied under the Jesuits at Rouen, and in early life relied exclusively on his pen for the means of subsistence. Taking to wife a younger daughter of General Lamperrière, Thomas soon became a prominent figure in society, partly by reason of the contrast he presented to his awkward and taciturn brother. In the theatre, however, the latter had a decided advantage; for Thomas, while endowed with a keen perception of dramatic effect, could not rise to the level of *The Cid* and *Polyeucte*. His versification was weak, the more so that he possessed the fatal gift of facility, and as to character and talents the two had little in common except their high moral principles and their enthusiasm for dramatic composition. Yet they had an affection for each other which withstood the test of daily intercourse for nearly forty years. They lived in adjoining houses, and in a wall which separated their studies was a sliding panel, of which Pierre availed himself when, as often happened, he had occasion to ask his brother for a missing word or rhyme. Thomas regarded him with reverence, while the author of *The Cid* declared that he would have given much to have written

his brother's best work. The first attempt of Thomas Corneille was *Les Engagements du Hasard*, which met with fair success, and about the time of its production at the Bourgogne a graceful compliment was paid by the court to the elder Corneille.

### Opera.

The opera, a form of entertainment which admitted of great spectacular effects, had been invented, as we have seen, in Italy, where it was now firmly established. In 1645 an operatic performance of *La Festa Teatrale della Finta Pazzia* was held at the Petit Luxembourg by a company brought from Italy for that purpose. Their patron was cardinal Mazarin, who occupied, but did not fill, the place of Richelieu, being urged by Urban VIII, pontiff and poet, to try the experiment. The libretto was by Jacques Torelli, a Venetian architect of theatrical proclivities, and the score by Giulio Strozzi. Had the minister foreseen the result of the experiment, he would never have ventured to make it. The spectators showed no signs of approval—some in order to mortify the obnoxious cardinal, others because they knew nothing of Italian, and still others because they objected to opera on principle. As the matter was put by the critic Saint-Evremond, "A play sung from beginning to end, with the personages discoursing in music on the most important as well as the most ordinary affairs of life, was contrary to nature, to the imagination, and offensive to the understanding." The critic might well have been asked whether French tragedy, with its

rhymed alexandrines and stately declamation, was less contrary to nature than what he denounced so bitterly. Piqued at his ill success, Mazarin ordered the opera of *Orfeo* to be played three times a week in the small salon of the Palais Royale, but it became a subject of derision at the court, and the publication of a satire on the subject caused the cardinal to disband his company. In its place he determined that an opera under the guise of a drama should be written by a dramatist of the French court, and for the purpose was selected Pierre Corneille. The result was *Andromède*, a graceful poem set to action with musical embellishments and a great variety of stage pictures and other decorations. The work was known to be a masterpiece, and greatly aroused the expectations of the court, but at the last moment the performance was indefinitely postponed. It was denounced by the queen's chaplain, condemned by the doctors of the Sorbonne and, though afterward sanctioned by the church, was again postponed on account of the insurrection of the Fronde, when Anne of Austria found it necessary to take refuge in flight with her young son, afterward Louis XIV, and cardinal Mazarin. Meanwhile new works were produced by Thomas Corneille, Boisrobert, Rotrou, Scarron, Duryer and others.

#### *Andromède.*

The storm passing over, the court returned to Paris, and *Andromède* was represented for the first time on a stage fitted up in the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon. Its success was instantaneous and complete, but this was due in part

to the scenic features under the care of Torelli, by whose appliances it required but a few seconds to change a set of elaborate scenery. His achievements at Venice as a stage mechanician gave rise to the suspicion that Torelli had dealings with the devil, and more than one attempt was made to assassinate him. Finding Venice too warm for him, "the great sorcerer," as he was styled, betook himself to Paris, where he was well received by Mazarin. While the marked success of *Andromède* was partly due to scenery and music, the lines also showed a grace of fancy for which even *The Cid* had hardly prepared the audience. Soon after the *Andromède* appeared Pierre Corneille's heroic comedy of *Don Sanche d'Arragon*, at first well received, but after a few nights played before the slimmest of audiences.

#### Nicomède.

Fairly successful, though only of political interest, was Corneille's *Nicomède*, which would have been pronounced dull had not the author shot a thread of fine irony through the speeches of the hero, dignified some of the scenes with elevation of character, and clothed the whole with the energetic language of which he was an unrivalled master. The time was opportune for its production. Condé and the prince of Conti had been released from the imprisonment caused by their attitude toward the court, and Paris was en fête after hearing the news. *Nicomède*, which appeared in the midst of this excitement, contained more than one passage in harmony with public sentiment, and the progress of the



play was often interrupted by significant bursts of applause.

**Madame Scarron.**

And now we must return for a moment to the abbé Scarron, of whom it may first of all be mentioned that he had entered into the matrimonial state. In the train of his guests he had noticed a beautiful girl of sixteen summers, named Françoise d'Aubigné. Her previous history and present position could not but give her great interest in his eyes. Of good birth, but a penniless orphan, she had fallen into the hands of a distant relative, Madame de Neuillant, who induced her, though not without considerable difficulty, to abjure Calvinism, the faith in which she was brought up, and who was now looking for a religious community that would receive Françoise without the customary dot. Meanwhile, Cinderella-like, the girl was reduced to the most menial occupations, until she was received, ere long, into the household of her kind protectress. Scarron was sensibly impressed by her beauty, her charm of manner and her cruel degradation. Suddenly becoming poetic, he sang of her under the names of Sylvia and Chloris, and finally, moved by passion and compassion, he resolved to provide for her himself. Did she wish to enter a convent? In that case he would pay the necessary money. Did she wish to marry? As for himself, he could offer only a limited fortune and a very ugly face. For once the jester was in earnest, and Mdlle. d'Aubigné, after a little hesitation, accepted the second proposal. "Immortality," he said to the notary as the marriage contract was being prepared, "is

what I settle upon her. The names of kings die with them; that of the wife of Scarron will live forever." The prediction was to be verified, though not exactly in the sense which the poet had anticipated.

Madame Scarron imparted a new charm and a new character to the meetings at her husband's house. Her timidity as a girl soon wore off, revealing a woman of skillful management, grace of manner and wit. Her salon became a temple of pleasure, and the proudest cavalier or dame thought it a privilege to be included in her set. The tongue of scandal was busy enough with her name, but there is absolutely no reason to suppose that her conduct justified the aspersions cast upon her. Nor is this her only claim to respect. From the hour of her marriage a change came over the tone of the gatherings in her salon; the conversation became decent without losing any of its brightness, as void of offense to ears polite as any to be heard in the refined atmosphere of the Hôtel de Rambouillet.

### Don Japhet D'Arménie.

Scarron himself yielded to the purifying influences exerted by his wife. Both at the table and in his writings he ceased to indulge in unclean jests or expressions, and the first comedy he wrote after his marriage, *Don Japhet d'Arménie*, bears emphatic testimony to the change thus wrought in him. Not inferior in liveliness to what had gone before, this play, in which a fool by profession appears for the first time on the French stage, was not only comparatively free from the taint of indecency, but

caused so little scandal that the author obtained permission to dedicate it to the king, a privilege of which he availed himself in a characteristic manner. "On occasions such as these," he writes, "it is usual to say in fine language that you are the greatest monarch in the world; that at the age of fourteen or fifteen you are more learned in the art of government than a gray-bearded ruler; that you are the handsomest of men, to say nothing of kings, etc. I do not propose to say any such thing; for all that may be taken for granted. I simply seek to persuade your majesty that, if you extended to me a little practical encouragement, you would not be doing a great wrong; that if you gave me a little practical encouragement, I should be gayer than I am; that if I were gayer than I am, I should produce more lively comedies; that if I produced more lively comedies, your majesty would be amused; that if you were amused, your money would not be wasted."

#### **Cyrano de Bergerac.**

In the circle at Scarron's residence was a man who never appeared in the streets of Paris without striking terror into the hearts of the passers-by. His name was Cyrano de Bergerac, known in the regiment of the Guards, to which he belonged, as a "démon de la bravoure." Rare, indeed, were the days on which he had not a duel on hand, usually caused by the strange deformity of his nose, at which people would laugh or stop to stare in the street, whereupon a challenge was sure to follow. His sword also appears to have been at the service of friends, as is proved by a well-authenticated

incident. A poet named Sinière, being assailed by twenty bravos at the instigation of a noble whom he had lampooned, Cyrano, who chanced to come up at the moment, attacked them single-handed, and in an instant killed two and wounded seven of the assailants, while the remainder, who recognized him as the "devil for courage," took to flight. He also distinguished himself at the sieges of Mouzon and Arras, and was severely wounded on each occasion. The fear that his injuries would be fatal, together with the exhortations of a nun from the Faubourg Saint Antoine, brought him to a better way of thinking and of living. He left the army, returned to Paris, and though he did not cease to cross swords with those who offended him, devoted himself to literature. His first writings were directed to scientific subjects, but among his works appeared a most curious one, entitled *A Comic History of the States and Empires of the Moon and Sun*.

### **La Mort D'Agrippine.**

Cyrano's first tragedy, entitled *La Mort d'Agrippine*, dealt with the conspiracy of Sejanus against Tiberius. It was produced at the Bourgogne under the patronage of an influential friend; but Cyrano's views on matters astronomical had brought him into collision with the priesthood, and at the first performance of his play most of the audience were in hostile mood. In the fourth act, where Séjan, in view of his triumph over Tibère, exclaims, "Trapons; voilà l'Hostie!" the storm broke forth; the voices of the actors

were drowned amid cries of "Atheist!" "Wretch!"  
 "Comme il parle du Saint Sacrement!"

### **Le Pédant Joué.**

Cyrano was presently consoled for this failure by the success of his comedy, entitled *Le Pédant Joué*, in which were some noteworthy features. Written in prose, a peasant, who is one of the characters, speaks in the jargon of his native province, contrary to all precedent. The dialogue is bright and amusing and the interest is further increased by the fact that the pedagogue-hero was the principal of the college of Beauvais, where the author was educated. Montfleuri, who played in the piece, did not satisfy the writer, who ordered him not to appear again on the stage for a month. Believing that he could not be in earnest, the actor paid no heed to the injunction. But Cyrano was very much in earnest, for the very next night he appeared in front of the pit, and, with a look of grim determination, roared out to the player that he must quit the stage or abide the consequences. Montfleuri meekly obeyed, and the audience was either too much frightened or too much astonished to make any demonstration at this unheard-of tyranny.

### **Pertharitz.**

A great misfortune was soon to befall the Hôtel de Bourgogne in the fate of an historical tragedy by the author of *The Cid*, entitled *Pertharitz, Roi des Lombards*. Not only was the versification feeble, but the

subjects were singularly unfortunate. The spectacle of a husband ransoming his wife at the price of a kingdom could not but excite ridicule, especially at a time when marital obligations were incurred only to be set aside. *Pertharite* did not survive its second representation, and it cannot be said that it deserved a better fate. For reasons unexplained, Corneille, who had cheerfully submitted to the popular verdict in other unsuccessful plays, was so irritated that he resolved to write no more for the stage. "It is better," he said, "to take leave of my own accord than to be forced into retirement. I am getting too old to be still in vogue. But I have the satisfaction of leaving the French stage in a better state than I found it, both in art and morals." The Parisian world probably attributed this resolution merely to a fit of pique; for Corneille was only forty-seven years of age, and none of his contemporaries were able to contend against him. Nevertheless, he was in earnest, for, withdrawing to Rouen, he began a translation of *Thomas-à-Kempis*, a work in which the queen took a lively interest.

#### Quinault.

The appearance on the stage of Philippe Quinault was attended with an innovation in theatrical affairs which may here be noted. Hitherto it had been the custom of the players to buy pieces outright, the amount paid being determined by the reputation of the dramatist. Corneille, for instance, received for his plays about two hundred crowns, and at times a larger sum, always obtaining a higher price than any of his

brother dramatists. One day Tristan appeared by appointment in the green-room of the Bourgogne to read a tragi-comedy, entitled *Les Rivaies*. Every one was pleased with it, and the authorities, supposing Tristan to be its author, offered for it a hundred crowns. The terms were gladly accepted, Tristan at the same time stating that the play was from the pen of Quinault, in whose fortunes he was deeply interested. This, he presumed, would not interfere with the arrangement just concluded. But the players declared that for a piece by an untried author they could not give more than fifty crowns. Unwilling to concede this reduction, Tristan suggested that a system of payment by results should be adopted. The author, for instance, might be allowed one-tenth of the receipts during the first run of the play, which thereafter would belong exclusively to the theatre. The old system had not been without its drawbacks, for if the play was a failure the actors were so much out of pocket by its purchase, and, if it succeeded, they were expected to make the author a substantial present. Tristan's proposition was therefore adopted, and Quinault profited greatly by the change. *Les Rivaies* was the feature of the season, the applause bestowed on it being heard two or three hundred yards away.

Quinault was a native of Paris and a baker's son, though receiving a much better education than most of the children of the Bourgeoisie. In early boyhood he attracted the notice of Tristan, who, observing his precocious intelligence and engaging manners, treated him with almost paternal tenderness. Naturally he



sympathized with his patron's tastes and pursuits, *Les Rivaux* being written under his direction. Handsome, vivacious, sociable and modest, he was esteemed by all with whom he came in contact, except those whom jealousy induced to disparage him. Two later works by Quinault added considerably to his reputation.

### **L'Écolier de Salamanque.**

Before the end of the season the Hôtel de Bourgogne found itself engaged in a trial of strength with the Théâtre du Marais. Scarron, one evening, read to some guests at his own house, *L'Écolier de Salamanque*, adapted by himself from a Spanish piece and intended for the Marais. Thereupon Boisrobert, who was one of the party, immediately procured the original, adapted it in his own fashion and brought it out at the Bourgogne, under the title of *Les Généreux Ennemis*. In addition to this act of treachery, when *L'Écolier* made its appearance, he declared that Scarron had borrowed his drama and marred it in the borrowing. For this breach of the laws of honor he did not go unpunished. The inevitable comparison between the two plays told heavily against him. *L'Écolier* was written in Scarron's distinctive style, and, unlike *Les Généreux Ennemis*, introduced a character which at once caught the fancy of the town. This was his Crispin, the parent of a numerous progeny of stage valets, the origin of which is not far to seek. Many deserters from the Spanish army had found employment in the houses of wealthy French families, and in Crispin we have one

of these deserters turned into a valet. His dress resembles that of a Spanish soldier, his speech abounds in allusions to war. If in one respect he seems to belong to Paris rather than Madrid—if he puts off the saturnine gravity peculiar to his nation and becomes a wit—it is because the conditions of his existence required him to be amusing. However that may be, he quickly ingratiated himself with every play-goer, and *L'Écolier* drew large crowds to the often-deserted pit of the Marais. Scarron showed his sense of Boisrobert's conduct in several acrid epigrams, and even the influence of his wife could not prevent him from indulging in coarse invectives.

During its brief existence, *Les Généreux Ennemis* was played alternately with *Les Illustres Ennemis*, by Thomas Corneille. Quinault was now deep in law studies, but he found time to write *L'Amant Indiscret*, the incidents of which seem to have been suggested by a piece represented at Lyons in the previous year, *L'Étourdi*. At the first performance, the stage-spectators overwhelmed him with congratulations, but the greatest compliment was paid to him by one of his own clients, who sat mute and motionless through sheer force of astonishment. "Could the author of these pretty and flowing lines," he asked, "be the young lawyer, who, but a few hours previously, had proved himself a master of the details and phraseology of litigation?" Of Boisrobert it is related that, on the morning of the day when his *Apparences Trompeuses* was to be produced, he was seen at church in an attitude of deep devotion, with an enormous breviary open before him.

"Who is this excellent man?" someone asked M. de Coupeauville, abbé de la Victoire. "The abbé Boisrobert, who is to preach this afternoon at the Hôtel de Bourgogne," was the reply. Not long afterward Coupeauville met Boisrobert leaving the theatre on foot. "Where," he asked, "is your coach?" "Stolen while I was inside the theatre," answered the dramatist. Another piece written by Boisrobert at this time was *L'Amant Ridicule*, which included a ballet des Plaisirs. The lover in question, learning that his mistress deems valor, a quality in which he is deficient, the highest quality of manhood, induces a cousin to feign a duel with him at a moment when she will be sure to witness it. The advantage, of course, is to be on his side; but the cousin, who happens to be desperately enamored of the lady himself, takes particular care that this part of the stratagem is not carried out.

### Death of Tristan.

In *La Comédie sans Comédie*, a strange medley by Quinault of every known form of the drama, the Théâtre du Marais again lighted upon a little mine of wealth, thanks in some measure to the efforts of two players new to the town—Laroque and Hauteroche. *La Comédie sans Comédie*, which did not justify its appellation, was the last of Quinault's plays that had the benefit of being revised by the author of the still popular *Mariamne*. In the autumn of 1655, Tristan died at the Hôtel de Guise from consumption, probably aggravated by his irregular habits, his devotion to the

gaming-table, and, above all, his grief at the loss of an idolized wife and son. But few of the day-dreams of his youth had been realized. In a few lines, which he is said to have written as an epitaph upon himself, we seem to have the echo of a wasted life, and his *Page Disgracié*, nominally a romance, presents us with a vivid narrative of his early career. But even in his most self-reproachful mood he must have felt that he had not lived wholly in vain. The success of his *Mariamne* had "balanced" that of *The Cid*. In the delineation of the softer passions he had illustrated the superiority of the language of the heart over the jargon of gallantry. The much-coveted honor of a seat in the Academy had been conferred upon him. It is probable, however, that all this afforded him less comfort in his dying hour than the almost filial affection of Quinault, whose gratitude to his old benefactor could not have proceeded from a sense of favors to come.

#### Death of Cyrano de Bergerac.

In the same year, to the intense relief of Parisian society in general and Montfleuri in particular, Cyrano de Bergerac was gathered to his fathers. Entering the duc d'Arpajon's house one evening he was struck on the head by a piece of wood, probably hurled at him by somebody who had felt the point of his sword. The wound assumed a threatening aspect. Being advised to seek perfect rest, he went to live in the house of a brother, where, although watched over with the greatest care, he died. He was still in the prime of manhood;

duelling and dissipation had prevented him from doing justice to his intellectual gifts, but the little he had written was to keep his name alive. The influence of *Le Pédant Joué* was strong, and his fantastic treatise on the sun and moon, itself a faint imitation of Rabelais, is supposed to have suggested to Swift the idea of *Gulliver's Travels*.

#### Death of Barron.

Barron, too, was now to disappear. Impersonating Don Diègue in *The Cid*, he was wounded in the foot by the sword of Chimène's father, and as gangrene supervened, the doctors believed it would be necessary to amputate the injured member. Exclusively dependent upon his earnings as an actor, and reluctant, perhaps, to live upon the charity of his comrades, he refused his consent to the operation. "A pretty figure," he said, "an actor with a wooden leg would make on the stage." He died a few weeks later, as appears in the *Gazette*, a news-letter in burlesque verse devoted to matters theatrical.

#### Heroism of Rotrou.

But a greater loss than all had occurred this time in the death of Rotrou, the oldest and most valued of Corneille's Parisian friends. For some time past Rotrou had filled the post of magistrate at Dreux, his native town, where, except when he had a play in rehearsal, he invariably resided. In the summer of 1655 a terrible epidemic visited Dreux, and, setting all medical skill at defiance, threatened to carry off the whole of

the population. Most of the local officials fled, but Rotrou, disregarding the entreaties of friends, would not follow their example. Holding the offices he did, he thought it was incumbent upon him to assist in checking the progress of the disorder, to mitigate suffering and to comfort the bereaved. "The peril in which I stand," he writes to his brother, "is imminent. The bells are at this moment tolling for the twenty-second death to-day. Before long, perhaps, they will toll for me; but my conscience tells me I am only performing my duty. The will of God be done!" He accordingly remained at his post, and three days after the letter was written the gloom of the townsfolk was deepened by the announcement that Rotrou had fallen a victim to the scourge. Prone as Frenchmen are to forget public services, the name of this intrepid magistrate is still held in affectionate veneration by the good people of Dreux, although more than two centuries elapsed before a monument to his memory was erected on the scene of his self-sacrifice. In his case, perhaps, no such tribute was required. His chief tragedies, with all their inequalities and shortcomings, occupy a permanent place in French literature; and the heroism which marked his premature end would show that, if he excelled in the portraiture of generous impulses and sentiments, it was because he was no stranger to them himself.

#### *Timocratz.*

The Théâtre Marais was now about to enjoy the greatest theatrical success thus far exhibited in the

stage annals of France. Quinault and Thomas Corneille, who had hitherto written nothing but comedies and tragi-comedies, suddenly essayed their powers in tragedy proper. The first gave the town a *Mort de Cyrus*, the second a *Timocrate*. Neither elevated nor energetic, *Cyrus* did not hold the audience for a moment, and the ridicule excited by some of the lines quickly stamped it as a failure. Very different was the fate of *Timocrate*. The walls of the theatre shook with applause, and Louis XIV himself was a spectator at one of the performances. The author, in addition to being told that he had surpassed his brother, was seriously recommended to lay down the pen for good, as he had nothing to add to his glory, and might imperil it by other works. In all, *Timocrate* was represented eighty-four times in succession, by far the longest run yet achieved, and it is probable that the piece would have remained on the bills for some time further if the actors had not found their task intolerably monotonous. "Messieurs," said the orator of the troupe to the audience, "it would seem that you are never tired of listening to *Timocrate*. For ourselves, we are utterly tired of playing it. If we go on doing so we shall run the risk of forgetting our other pieces. Permit us, then, to withdraw it." It was evidently believed, behind the scenes, that the tragedy might be revived at no distant period with equal success; and the audience, perhaps holding a similar opinion, granted the request. But *Timocrate* was never seen on the stage again. Extravagantly praised, it had to face the ordeal of extravagant censure, and its merits were not sufficiently great to



carry it through a trying ordeal; therefore, the apparent wisdom of withholding it.

### Corneille's Return to the Stage.

Nothing discouraged, the rising dramatist brought out a *Bérénice*, based on the *Cyrus* of Madeleine de Scudéri, and in the words of Loret, "young Corneille was now the marvel of the theatre," especially as others had failed, and Duryer, after a long struggle with ill-fortune, had just gone to his rest. But the young poet was not to enjoy this distinction long. Pierre Corneille, who was now in his fifty-third year, and whose moroseness had not been lightened by the dull routine of his Rouen life and the labor of translating Thomas-à-Kempis, began to cast wistful glances on the scene of his early triumphs. The pique he felt at the condemnation of *Pertharite* had passed away, while the longing to figure again as the hero of a first night—to have his verse declaimed by a trained stage artist, to hear the rounds of applause that would follow each noble speech, to receive the homage due to the greatest dramatic genius of his time—took possession of his mind. His altered resolution appears in some lines addressed to Fouquet, who, delighted to be the means of restoring the author of *The Cid* and *Polyeucte* to the boards, left no stone unturned to confirm it. He loaded the poet with delicately-rendered benefits, at the same time suggesting that he would do well to treat the finely tragic legends of *Ædipus* and *Camilla*. In the former, by far the more difficult of the two, Corneille found an

acceptable theme, and an *Œdipe* from his pen, with Floridor as the fate-driven hero and Mdlle. Beauchâteau as Jocaste, was brought out at the Bourgogne early in 1659.

### *Œdipe.*

As may be supposed, the news that the old favorite had reëntered the lists created no little excitement. The audience assembled in a sanguine mood, for it was probable that the contemplation which comes of leisure had reinvigorated his mind, and he was reported to have elaborated the play with patient care. Unfortunately, their hopes were only partially realized. Executed under the most favorable conditions, *Œdipe* yet fell short of anything like greatness, dramatic or poetic, and must have gone with the succession of plays beginning with *Rodogune* to suggest that Corneille was no longer capable of producing a *Cid*, a *Cinna* or a *Polyeucte*. In truth, his genius seems to have decayed soon after his marriage. It was a plant which attained a precocious maturity, put forth the richest fruit, and then passed into a state of comparative unproductiveness. In all that he had conceived during the last seventeen years a gradual decline of force is apparent. Here and there we are reminded of what he had been, but the effect is like that of a flash of lightning in an ever-darkening sky. Unlike Sophocles, whose *Œdipus* he had lately striven to surpass, he fell short of himself as time went on. "Believe me," the outspoken and misanthropic Duc de Montausier said to him, "verse-making is the prerogative of youth only;" and in this instance, it must

be allowed, the proposition was not unsupported by the logic of facts.

### Decline of Corneille's Powers.

Nor did Corneille retard his downward course by making full use of the residue of his power. He now wrote in the spirit of a statesman rather than of a poet. He aimed at political instead of ethical interest. He subordinated passion and imagination to force of reasoning. He appealed more than ever to the sentiment of admiration. He relied upon ingenious complexity of plot in preference to transcripts of human nature. If his object in all this was to disguise his weakness, to prove that his hand had not lost its cunning, he could not have been worse advised. His change of policy led him to select subjects unsusceptible of the best kind of dramatic effect, and it was not in his power to redeem or gloss over their poverty by beauties of detail and diction. Broadly speaking, his later plays are heavy, uninspiring and lifted above mediocrity only by the dignity and keen insight with which he treated his ill-chosen materials. Nevertheless, his popularity outlived his work. The announcement of a novelty from his pen did not fail to bring together a large and well-disposed audience, and the voice of criticism was softened by grateful remembrance of the intellectual enjoyment derived from his best productions. *Œdipe*, with all its shortcomings, was applauded so vigorously that Louis XIV appeared at the Bourgogne to see it—an honor not frequently done to the theatre. From this time, however, his supremacy was to be divided with another.

## IV.

### Molière and the Corneilles.

In the Rue Saint Honoré, at the corner of the Rue des Vieilles Étuves, there had long stood a house bearing the sign of the Pavillon des Cinges, and appropriately ornamented over the doorway with an old sculpture representing apes in an apple-tree. Soon after the assassination of Henri Quatre, this house fell into the hands of an upholsterer named Poquelin, who soon became one of the most prosperous of the Parisian bourgeoisie. Besides doing well in business, he held the appointment of valet-tapissier to the king—that is, he accompanied his majesty about the country, looked to the draperies of the apartments occupied by the court in the châteaux, and in particular circumstances made up the royal bed-chamber. He married one Marie Cresse, who possessed a small fortune, and who, although her father was a tradesman, seems to have been of good descent. Four or five children were the issue of the union, the eldest, Jean Batiste Poquelin, coming into the world on the 15th of January, 1622. This is the one who, amid the prankishness of youth, was to prove a source of anxiety to parents, whimsical in his studies, a stroller at maturity, yet in

the end, under a changed name, a power in the dramatic world.

### *Molière's Boyhood and Education.*

As a boy, it is said, Jean displayed a surprising turn for mimicry. He reproduced, with accuracy and humor, the peculiarities of servants, customers in the shop and the priests and worshippers at the church, to which his mother, one of the most pious of women, led him every Sunday for mass and vespers. Madame Poquelin, proud as she may have been of his precocious intelligence, sternly set her face against such amusements, especially when they were indulged in at the expense of the clergy. "Lisette," said Jean to a work-girl in the house, after receiving a sound chastisement for such an offense, "can you tell me why my imitations of the priest make them so furious?" "Certainly," was the reply; "you succeed only too well, my little Jean." It is obvious that, if the young mimic was to become a respectable citizen, he should have been kept away from the theatre; but a good-natured relative, usually supposed to have been his maternal grandfather, frequently carried him off to see Bellerose and the trois farceurs at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Before long he had theatricals on the brain, and neither threats nor caresses could induce him to initiate himself into the mysteries of his father's business. "I verily believe," M. Poquelin exclaimed, "that the boy will turn actor"—a suggestion which at that time sent a shiver through the frames of all right-minded persons, playgoers not excepted. Modern criticism has rejected

some of these stories as apocryphal, but they are chiefly from the lips of Jean himself, and doubtless relate what is very near the truth as to his early career.

In his fourteenth year, after losing his mother, Jean was sent as a day-boarder to the college of Clermont, where, as a means of extending their influence and gaining valuable recruits, the Jesuits educated a large number of boys gratuitously, or for a nominal sum. The pupils represented many grades of society, and the variety of character they exhibited must have brought much food for reflection to so quick an observer as Jean is reported to have been. His chosen companions at the college were four youths destined to attain eminence in different ways—the prince de Conti, Chapelle, Bernier and Hesnault. According to biographical tradition, he made rapid progress in humanities and rhetoric, the more so because the Jesuits industriously fostered a spirit of emulation among their flock. Nor was his education confined to what he learned at the college. Chapelle, at the instance of his father, entered upon an independent course of philosophy under Gassendi; and young Poquelin, with Hesnault and Bernier, was allowed to join him. It is significant that in a short time he should have set to work upon a translation of Lueretius, but we may reasonably doubt whether the strangely qualified epicureanism of the tutor exercised more than a passing influence over his mind. Cyrano de Bergerac, as the story goes, obtained admission to the little class by bursting in upon them, laying his hand upon his sword, and threatening the philosopher with death if the favor were denied him. In 1641, owing to the illness of his father, Jean went

with Louis XIII and the court to the south as valet-tapisier, the reversion of which office had previously been secured for him by purchase. But M. Poquelin did not intend his son to have only one string to his bow. Jean devoted himself to law studies, and a satirical ballad directed against him in after years, referring to his appearance at the Palais de Justice in the robe of an advocate, may be taken as a proof that he was actually called to the bar.

### **Amateur Theatricals.**

His liking for the stage, however, had not been destroyed by the study of the law. He joined a company of amateurs who, collectively known as the "*Illustre Théâtre*," played in a racket court supported by trestles in the quartier de Saint Paul. These performances were well attended, for the reason, perhaps, that admission was free; but the amateurs, attributing their success to another cause, removed their theatre to a tennis court in the faubourg Saint Germain, and, in defiance of the privileges of the comedians by profession, charged a small fee for admission. The self-confidence of the little band was somewhat rudely dispelled; by ceasing to act gratuitously they at once lost ground in public estimation; their audiences dwindled to a mere handful, and these came only to decry them. In this emergency, Jean, assuming command of the troupe, summoned to his aid a few players who chanced to be in Paris at the time—two brothers and two sisters named Béjart, apparently of good birth, and a buffoon named Duparc, better known as Gros-René. Madeleine, the elder of the two



*MOLIERE READING TO HIS TROUPE*

*After an original painting by G. Melingue.*

*"All the actors loved their chief, who united to extraordinary genius an honorable character and charming manner."*

LA GRANGE, *Register*.





sisters, is described by a contemporary as one of the best of living actresses; and she was certainly one of the most beautiful. Even her charms, however, did not restore the fortunes of the *Illustre Théâtre*. The enterprise ended in disaster, young Poquelin being proceeded against and imprisoned for debt by the costumier, the tallow-chandler and other creditors.

### A Strolling Player.

Happily, this cruel experience did not make the young player disgusted with the stage. His taste for it had, indeed, become a passion; and at length, giving way to an overmastering impulse, he took possession of a little fortune bequeathed to him by his mother, formally relinquished his right to the reversion of his father's office at court, resigned his chances of forensic distinction, and determined to go into the country with the Bégarts and Duparc as a strolling player. His family, of course, were greatly distressed at the news. In their view he was deliberately foregoing excellent prospects to adopt a calling held in scant respect, the decree of Richelieu notwithstanding. In order to diminish their annoyance he exchanged the name of Poquelin for that of Molière, the origin of which is a matter of speculation. But any entreaties that were made to him to reconsider his intention fell upon deaf ears. In 1646 he left Paris with his new-found colleagues, and, unable to believe that a passion for the stage could account for such an act of self-sacrifice, his friends declared that the young advocate had deserted the law to follow Madeleine Béjart—a

notion which in years to come obtained some currency.

Molière, to whom his companions looked from the outset for guidance, may have been induced by his almost proverbial generosity to make good the deficiencies of the theatrical exchequer from his own pocket, but even in that case the troupe could hardly have escaped the hardships inseparable from the course of life they had adopted. It was truly a changeful life—one of constant tramping from place to place, of alternate success and disappointment, of steady perseverance in all circumstances, and also, perhaps, of more or less stirring adventures. Now the strollers find themselves in a district scourged by civil war; now they deferentially seek the sanction of some upstart maire to perform within his jurisdiction; now they declaim the stately verse of Corneille in a barn or on a stage improvised in the street; now they look ruefully at each other as the keeper of the inn in which they have sojourned lays his reckoning before them. Scarron's *Roman Comique* enables us to realize in some measure the conditions of their existence; indeed, it is not improbable that this whimsical picture of itinerant players in the seventeenth century—a work destined to outlive the drollest of its author's farces—was suggested in part by a chance encounter with the *Illustre Théâtre* at Mans, where the scene of the story is laid. "Molière," writes a contemporary, "was neither too stout nor too thin. He was rather above than below the medium height; his carriage was noble, his legs finely formed; he had a serious air and walked gravely. His complexion was dark; his nose

and mouth were rather large, his lips a little thick, his eyebrows very black, and the changes of his facial expression incessant. As to character, he was gentle, kind and generous." Destin, the hero of the *Roman Comique*, is a man of similar stamp—"sympathetic, refined in manner, brave, contemplative, amiable, a personification of pleasant insouciance, by turns grave and gay, full of noble impulses." Whatever may have been the source of Scarron's inspiration in this instance, the district particularly favored by Molière and his companions was the south and the southeast of France, the heart of the territory in which the troubadours of old had sung.

### Early Plays.

It was not long before fame began to mark him for her own. He achieved considerable distinction as an actor. In tragedy, it is true, he was not at home; but a keen sense of humor, aided by experience, study, attention to by-play, and a striking naturalness of recitation and manner, in direct contrast to the style cultivated on the Paris stage, seems to have given life and spirit to all his parts in comedy. "The delicacy with which he embodied a character and expressed a sentiment," says Grimarest, "proved that he was profoundly versed in the art of declamation. He entered into the smallest details of a part, and, unlike those who have no fixed rule or principle for their acting, did not recite at hazard." Fortunately, the applause he won in this way did not satisfy his ambition. He wrote at least eleven farces, of which only *Le Médecin Volant* and *La*



*Jalousie du Barbouille* have come down to us, except by name. They belonged to what are known as the *baissers du rideau* of the Italian school, replete with diverting incident, often lighted up by flashes of wit, and depending in a large degree upon the resources of the players. In Molière's own words, they "procured him some little reputation," though not of a kind to afford him the highest pleasure. He longed to follow up the path opened in the *Menteur*, which, as he frankly avowed in after years, fixed his ideas on the subject of comedy. It was to be feared that a play of this order would be received with less favor by provincial audiences than one like the *Médecin Volant*, but the young dramatist was not deterred by the prospect of a little temporary loss from making the experiment. In *L'Étourdi*, working upon a story taken from *L'Innavertito*, he produced a work which, if not entirely free from the rough fun in vogue, was remarkable alike for spirit, truth and the individuality of at least one of the characters. Mascarille, a clever valet, possibly suggested by Davus, devises a variety of schemes to aid his master, Lélie, in a love pursuit. He is foiled at almost every step by the blundering interference of the latter, who, however, among other good qualities, wins our respect by the very straightforwardness that causes his discomfiture. Molière was soon reassured as to the result of his new departure. *L'Étourdi* evoked extraordinary applause, and the use made of it by Quinault in *L'Amant Indiscret* would suggest that its fame was not confined to a narrow area.

At Lyons, where this delightful little comedy first

appeared, the troupe seems to have been reinforced by five new players—Mdlle. Duparc, Ducroisy, Lagrange and the Debries. The first was a sister of Gros-René, for whom Molière had written at least two of his Italian-like farces. Nothing could have been more queenly than the way in which she filled the most dignified characters, such as the heroines of Corneille. Philibert Gassaud, Sieur Ducroisy, was a gentleman of Beaure, who had long withstood a strong penchant for the stage. In tragedy and anything like serious comedy he proved a valuable recruit. Charles Varlet, Sieur de Lagrange, had come from Amiens. He had rare intelligence and taste, which Molière cultivated to the highest point. Edouard Wilquin, Sieur Debie, an inveterate drunkard, was engaged on account of his wife, Catherine Leclerc, a woman of finely sympathetic nature, on whom he relied for subsistence, but whom he often subjected to brutal ill-treatment. Any affection she may have had for him had long since died away; she lived only for her art, and to that art she proved a distinguished ornament. “Mdlle. Debie,” writes one who saw her, “was tall, slender and graceful; noble in her manner and natural in all her attitudes, with something particularly delicate in her face and features, which rendered her most fitting for the part of ingénue. Her eyes had a peculiar charm of candor and tenderness.”

#### *Mdlle. Debie.*

The accession of Mdlle. Duparc and Mdlle. Debie serves to throw new light on the character of Molière.

If tradition may be credited, he fell desperately in love with the former, to whom he made an offer of marriage, but was deliberately refused. Her beauty led her to believe that she might make what the world would deem a good marriage, and in Molière she saw only a moderately successful author and strolling player. Had a presentiment of his future greatness crossed her mind she might have returned a different answer. It was in vain that Molière endeavored to forget his disappointment. He fell a prey to melancholy, and ceased for a time to feel any interest in the present or the future. Mdlle. Debrie, who from the outset had understood him better than any one else, endeavored to dispel his sadness. By degrees she induced him to make her his confidant, to feel that her sympathy was dear to him. "I fear," he said to her one day, "that you have done me a cruel kindness. My malady seems to have left me, but in reality it has only changed its form. I now require a physician to heal the wounds you have yourself caused." No music could have been more grateful to the ear of the long unhappy woman than these words. Considerations which even in that age must have had weight with her—the obligations of a wife, self-respect, her regard for the opinions of others—all were scattered to the four winds. "Those wounds," she said, "have been more fatal to myself than to you."

*Prince de Conti.*

Mdlle. Debrie may well have been regarded by Molière as a personification of Fortune. From this

moment he struck into the current which swept him to his goal. His fellow-pupil at college, the prince de Conti, now at peace with the government, had taken up his quarters at the château of La Grange, near Pézénas, where he wished to be entertained by the players. His secretary, De Cosnac, afterward bishop of Aix, sent for the troupe of Molière, and accompanied by Debrie, who bore the loss of his wife like a man of the world, and did not allow resentment to interfere with his interests, they promptly set forth for Pézénas. In the meantime, however, the prince had impatiently engaged another set of players, headed by one Cormier. Molière arrived, and, being told that his services were not required, asked that the expenses he had incurred by the journey should be defrayed by the prince. The request was reasonable enough, but the prince, who was said to be "obstinate about trifles," would not accede to it. "This injustice," writes Cosnac, "had so much effect upon me that I decided to have a representation by Molière's troupe in the theatre at Pézénas, and to give them 2,000 crowns from my own pocket rather than not to keep faith with them. M. le Prince, touched in his honor by my conduct, also consented that they should play once in the theatre at La Grange," the result being that they were kept there during the whole of his stay.

### **Le Dépit Amoureux.**

Molière's stock was now enriched by another excellent comedy, *Le Dépit Amoureux*, written in the style of *L'Etourdi*. It had two distinct plots, one of which

turns upon the love-tiff just related, and was invented by himself. The play seems to have afforded much delight to the household at La Grange, thanks to the humor, spirit and grace of the dialogue. Did the prince de Conti recognize in the author-actor, whose claim for expenses he had refused, the Jean Batiste Poquelin of college days? History does not tell us; but tradition has it that from this time the prince took a practical interest in Molière's prosperity. In a few months he was advised to change his circuit so as to be within reach of Paris, and while at Rouen, in the autumn of 1658, the troupe received a summons to act in Paris before the king.

As *Le Dépit Amoureux*, or *The Love-tiff*, had been a favorite acting comedy since its first production in 1656 until as late as 1875, some further mention of it will be here in place. The incidents are in the main arranged artistically, but after the Spanish fashion, the plot being too complicated and the ending unnatural. The characters are well delineated, and fathers, lovers, mistresses and servants all move about amid a complication of errors from which there is no visible disentangling. Nearly all French actors who have played valets or soubrettes have attempted the character of the valet and Marinette, and even the great Rachel once took the latter part, though it was clearly out of her line. *The Love-tiff* has been imitated by Dryden in his *Evening's Love*, and by Vanbrugh in his *Mistake*, where the scene is laid in Spain, and the French is paraphrased with a spirit and ease which is seldom found in a mere translation. Finally, it was freely borrowed in

*The Wrangling Lovers* of Ravenscroft, of whom Baker says in his *Biographia Dramatica*, "He was a writer or compiler of plays, who lived in the reigns of Charles II and his two successors. He was an arrant plagiarist." Scene IX, between Albert, father of Lucile, acted by Molière, Lucile, Valère, her pseudo-lover, and Mascarille, his servant, requires no explanation:

*Mascarille*.—Signor Albert, at least be silent. At length, madam, everything conspires to make your happiness complete. Your father, who is informed of your love, leaves you your husband and gives his permission to your union, provided that, banishing all frivolous fears, a few words from your mouth corroborate what we have told him.

*Lucile*.—What nonsense does this impudent scoundrel tell me?

*Masc*.—That is all right. I am already honored with a fine title.

*Luc*.—Pray, sir, who has invented this nice story which has been spread about to-day?

*Valère*.—Pardon me, charming creature. My servant has been babbling; but our marriage is discovered without my consent.

*Luc*.—Our marriage?

*Val*.—Everything is known, adorable Lucile; it is vain to dissemble.

*Luc*.—What! the ardor of my passion has made you my husband?

*Val*.—It is a happiness which causes a great many heart-burnings, but I impute the successful result of my courtship less to your great passion for me than to your kindness of heart. I know you have cause to be offended, that it was a secret which you would fain have concealed. I myself have put a restraint on my ardor, so that I might not violate your express commands; but . . . . .

*Masc.*—Yes, it was I who told it. What great harm is done?

*Luc.*—Was there ever a falsehood like this? Dare you mention this in my very presence, and hope to obtain my hand by this fine contrivance? What a wretched lover you are—you, whose gallant passion would wound my honor because it could not gain my heart; who wish to frighten my father by a foolish story, so that you might obtain my hand as a reward for having vilified me. Though everything were favorable to your love—my father, fate and my own inclination, yet my well-founded resentment would struggle against my own inclination, fate and my father, and even lose life rather than be united to one who thought to obtain my hand in this manner. Begone! If my sex could with decency be provoked to any outburst of rage, I would let you know what it was to treat me thus.

*Val.*—(To Mascarille.) It is all over with us; her anger cannot be appeased

*Masc.*—Let me speak to her. Prithee, madam, what is the good of all these excuses? What are you thinking of? And what strange whim makes you thus oppose your own happiness? If your father were a harsh parent, the case would be different; but he listens to reason, and he himself has assured me that if you would but confess the truth, his affection would grant you everything. I believe you are a little ashamed frankly to acknowledge that you have yielded to love; but if you have lost a trifling amount of freedom, everything will be set to rights again by a good marriage. Your great love for Valère may be blamed a little, but the mischief is not so great as if you had murdered a man. We all know that flesh is frail, and that a maid is neither stock nor stone. You were not the first, that is certain; and you will not be the last, I dare say.

*Luc.*—What! can you listen to this shameless talk, and make no reply to these indignities?

*Albert.*—What would you have me say? This affair puts me quite beside myself.

*Masc.*—Upon my word, madam, you ought to have confessed all before now.

*Luc.*—What ought I to have confessed?



*Masc.*—What? Why, what has passed between my master and you. A fine joke, indeed!

*Luc.*—Why, what has passed between your master and me, impudent wretch?

*Masc.*—You ought, I think, to know that better than I; you passed that night too agreeably to make us believe you could forget it so soon.

*Luc.*—Father, we have too long borne with the insolence of an impudent lackey. (Gives him a box on the ear.)

## SCENE X.

Albert, Valère, Mascarille.

*Mascarille.*—I think she gave me a box on the ear.

*Albert.*—Begone! rascal, villain! Her father approves the way in which she has made her hand felt upon your cheek.

*Masc.*—May be so; yet may the devil take me if I said anything but what was true!

*Alb.*—And may I lose an ear if you carry on this impudence any farther!

*Masc.*—Shall I send for two witnesses to testify to the truth of my statements?

*Alb.*—Shall I send for two of my servants to give you a sound thrashing?

*Masc.*—Their testimony will corroborate mine.

*Alb.*—Their arms may make up for my want of strength.

*Masc.*—I tell you, Lucile behaves thus because she is ashamed.

*Alb.*—I tell you, you shall be answerable for all this.

*Masc.*—Do you know Ormin, that stout and clever notary?

*Alb.*—Do you know Grimphant, the city executioner?

*Masc.*—And Simon, the tailor, who used formerly to work for all the people of fashion?

*Alb.*—And the gibbet set up in the middle of the market-place?

*Masc.*—You shall see they will confirm the truth of this marriage.

*Alb.*—You shall see they will make an end of you.

*Masc.*—They were the witnesses chosen by them.

*Alb.*—They shall shortly revenge me on you.

*Masc.*—I myself saw them at the altar.

*Alb.*—And I myself shall see you with a halter.

*Masc.*—By the same token, your daughter had a black veil on.

*Alb.*—By the same token, your face foretells your doom.

*Masc.*—What an obstinate old man!

*Alb.*—What a cursed rascal! You may thank my advanced years, which prevent me from punishing your insulting remarks upon the spot; but I promise you, you shall be paid with full interest.

### Molière at Court.

Molière's first performance before the king took place in the guard hall of the old Louvre, and the players may well have been unnerved as they peeped through the little hole in the curtain at the audience. No such gathering had ever assembled to watch them. The court of France—the most splendid in history—was present in all its strength. Here was Louis XIV, now twenty years of age, an ardent votary of pleasure, yet stately and reserved, with strength of character plainly written in his face; here was his brother, dressed more like a girl than a boy; here was Anne of Austria, still regent of France, and though grown somewhat stout, retaining much of her celebrated beauty; here, conspicuous by his red robe, his finely-cut features and long, white hair, was Cardinal Mazarin, who for many years had guided the vessel of State. To the rear was a host

of the butterflies belonging to the court, together with a few actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, all anxious to see of what stuff these favored rivals were made. The play bespoken for the evening was Corneille's *Nicomède*. We may suspect that, as the performance went on, a feeling of disappointment stole over the audience, the actors from the Bourgogne excepted. Molière and his companions were, of course, far less at home in the stately lines of Corneille than in the quick and vivacious dialogue of Molière, and the trepidation incident to the occasion must have rendered them unable to do anything like justice to themselves. *Nicomède* finished, Molière, sensible of their shortcomings, took a very unusual step. He made a speech from the stage; he thanked his majesty for his goodness in bearing the defects of the troupe, who had naturally felt some agitation on finding themselves before so august an assembly, and who, in their eagerness to have the honor of playing before the greatest king in the world, had forgotten that he had already much better actors in his service. "As," continued Molière, "his majesty has so far endured our country manners, I venture, very humbly, to hope that I may be permitted to give one of the little pieces which have procured me some reputation, and with which I have been fortunate enough to amuse the provinces." The king assented by retaining his seat, and the audience, who but a moment before had been preparing to disperse, resumed an attitude of attention. The piece referred to was *Le Docteur Amoureux*, one of Molière's earliest farces. The result must have more than equalled his anticipations. He

quickly converted failure into triumph, and everybody present had much ado to restrain his loudest laughter. The actors from the Bourgogne must have felt that in Molière they had a dangerous rival in comedy—an impression considerably deepened when, an hour or two later, it was found that the king had requested him and his comrades to establish themselves in Paris under the style and title of the “*Troupe de Monsieur*.”

And now the goal was won. After a probation of twelve years, representing the best period of his life, Molière had fully justified his abandonment of the career once prepared for him. His self-imposed exile from Paris, an exile which, as might have been expected of a Frenchman born and bred there, he had felt very deeply, was at an end. He had appeared before the king, had won his favor and had received from him a substantial guarantee of future support. No longer was it necessary for him and those who had cast in their lot with his to trudge from one provincial town to another, to bow low for permission to regale the populace with the choicest productions of French dramatic genius, and then, as was too often the case, to be received with apathy by a throng incapable of appreciating the value of what he set before them. Nor was his exultation materially damped by a want of cordial recognition from his family. Even after he had become famous, his brother omitted his name from a genealogy which, in the pride of their mother's descent, they caused to be drawn up; but old M. Poquelin, actuated by an almost superstitious faith in the judgment of kings, to say nothing of paternal affection, welcomed

him with open arms. Next came social recognition; the doors of many exclusive houses were open to the man on whom the sun of Court favor had begun to shine. If only his mother, the devout Marie Cresse of thirty years before, who had been pious enough to thrash him for mimicking a priest, could have lived to join in the welcome! As for the troupe, he had endeared himself to them by his good-will and generosity, and a sense of the fact that they owed their present position to his gifts served to strengthen the ties which bound them to him. No leader was ever regarded with more affectionate loyalty by his followers than Molière.

The theatre assigned to him was the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon, where, by the influence of Mazarin, a new troupe of Italian players had begun to appear three times a week in farce. The rivalry of these foreigners was not to be despised, especially as they showed a very strong tendency to use French, in preference to their own language. From one point of view, no doubt, their entertainment had a rather monotonous aspect. Its personages, as in bygone times, were nearly always the same—harlequin, pantaloon, columbine and the rest,—but to the delight of the cardinal, who probably supported it as a means of establishing opera in France, the more it was shown the better it seemed to be liked. Frequently novel in plot, it was animated throughout by a joyous spirit, to which ample effect was given on the stage.

Molière took the off-days of the Italian comedians—Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Before his campaign opened he was joined by L'Epi, of the Marais,

and an actor of great excellence in both tragedy and comedy, Guillaume Marcoureaux, Sieur de Brécourt, formerly an officer in the army. Unfortunately, the latter had an ungovernable temper, and his engagement in the troupe had hardly been signed when, having run an insolent coachman through the body on the Fontainebleau road, he sought refuge in Holland from the vengeance of the law. Molière began with *Héraclius* and other tragedies by Corneille, but it was not until *L'Étourdi* and *Le Dépit Amoureux* were played that his troupe won the town they were permitted to woo. The charms of these pieces, set forth by clever and disciplined acting, were acknowledged with enthusiasm, and nothing was wanting to the triumph of the dramatist but the presence of the king. Alive to the mistake he had made in giving, at the outset, a succession of tragedies, Molière instantly proceeded to confirm the advantage he had gained. He would write another comedy, and it occurred to him that by importing into his work some genial, yet incisive ridicule, of a popular folly, he would do himself no harm.

### *Les Précieuses Ridicules.*

He had not far too look in Paris to find an inviting subject. In one respect, it may be said, Parisian society had taken leave of its senses. The ultra-refinement introduced by the marquise de Rambouillet was being carried to an almost incredible extreme. Every frequenter of the ruelles and salons of fashion adopted a

style of speech in comparison with which the euphuism of yore was lucidity itself. Extravagant metaphors and emblems were employed to designate the merest trifles. The précieuses and their worshippers would not have been content to call a spade "an oblong instrument of manual industry." In their language a nightcap was a "complice innocent de Mensonge;" water, "humeur celeste;" a chair, a "commodité de la conversation;" a mirror, a "conseiller des grâces." If, in their laborious attempts to coin new phrases they often became unintelligible to each other, as was probably the case, they deemed it only another proof of their delicacy of thought and expression. Blended with this curious neologism, too, was a studied and elaborate affectation of chaste, romantic sentiment. Nothing could be more beautiful than Platonic love, but as "the world must be peopled" it was necessary to enter into the holy state of matrimony, though not with any appearance of haste. Only by slowly and barely perceptible degrees should a female heart "yield to its assailant." No lover should have a chance of being made happy until he had traversed the whole of Loveland, as mapped out for the instruction of the sterner sex by Madeleine de Seudéri. Beginning at Indifference, he would have to gradually make his way throughout Disinterested Pleasure, Respect, Assiduity, Empressment and Sensibility to the city of Tenderness, whence the river of Inclination would bear him to the Dangerous sea, as laid down in the map of the country of Tenderness. Proposals of marriage should be met at first by a blank refusal, however deeply engaged the affections might be. Many of



the fantastic ideas thus cherished were favored by romances of the *Clélie* and *Cyrus* type, from which, indeed, a new code of social laws was deduced, and which, with a mass of madrigals and sonnets, remarkable at best for dainty gallantry, were accepted by the elegant contemporaries of Corneille and Pascal as literature of the first water. Naturally enough, the folly of the précieuses found imitators among the younger section of the Bourgeoisie. Many an honest citizen suddenly found himself an object of derision and scorn to his womenkind on account of his honest directness of utterance, his unpolished manners, his profound want of sympathy with what they called poetry.

Molière, it must be remembered, was still an obscure comedian, as yet, uncertain of his footing in the capital, and by the course he proposed would inevitably provoke the hostility of an influential sect. Nevertheless he did not hesitate. Determined to arrest this increasing corruption of taste, sentiment and language by force of satire, he wrote a comedy in one act, entitled *Les Précieuses Ridicules*. Madelon and Cathos, respectively the daughter and niece of Gorgibus, a plain-speaking citizen, have been bitten by the prevailing rage. They give themselves up to the romances of Mdlle. de Scudéri, call themselves Polixène and Aminte and their maid Almanzor, and generally behave in a way which leads the old man to suspect their sanity. To crown all, they reject with ineffable disdain the proposals of two suitors of good worldly position, but unfortunately unversed in the ways of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. "How," asked Madelon, "could we be ex-

pected to endure such irregular proceedings as theirs? To begin point-blank by proposing marriage?"

The lovers, indignant at the lofty scorn with which they have been repelled, cause their valets, Mascarille and Jodelet, to lay siege to the hearts of the précieuses in the guise of gentlemen of quality. The scheme is as successful as they could wish. Poor Madelon and Cathos mistake the lively impudence of the two valets for the quintessence of Parisian gallantry, and are lost in admiration of a wretched impromptu composed by Mascarille. But from this seventh heaven of delight they are abruptly lowered. The rejected lovers appear; the valets are stripped of their borrowed plumes, and the précieuses have reason devoutly to wish that the earth would open under their feet to hide their confusion. It is interesting to note that, while holding up their affectation to laughter, Molière does not alienate them from our sympathies, which are never with the authors of the deception practiced upon them. He indirectly suggests that, so far from being blue-stockings in the ordinary sense of the term, they are mere girls under the influence of a passing mania. But while showing this tenderness for them he does not lose sight of his chief object. The model they set before themselves is assailed with a humor and satirical power previously unknown to the stage.

Evidently unaware of the castigation in store for them, several well-known précieuses, including Mdlle. Deshoulières, Menage, Chaplain and Ninon de l'Enclos, were among the audience. No sooner did the meaning of the comedy become manifest than the theatre rang with

laughter and applause. Many a man present had a Madelon or a Cathos at home; all, like children admitted behind the scenes, saw with wonder and mirth the tinsel, which, from a distance, they had admired as crowns and royal robes. "Courage, Molière," cried an old man, starting up in the parterre, "that is true comedy." Ménage had the sagacity to perceive that the purpose of so vivacious a satire would be attained. "Monsieur," he said to Chapelain, "we have approved too much the follies which Molière has so pointedly and sensibly ridiculed. As Saint-Remi remarked to Clovie, we must 'burn what we have adored and adore what we have been disposed to burn.'" By others of its victims, however, the piece was taken in a different way. No sooner had the first representation ended than powerful influence was exerted to prevent a second, and Molière received an official order not to play the piece again. In two or three weeks, however, the prohibition was withdrawn, probably at the instance of the king, before whom *Les Précieuses Ridicules* was played during his sojourn in the Pyrenees. Although an ardent admirer of Madeleine de Scudéri's romances, Louis XIV was induced by his love of tormenting others—a curious trait in his character—to take part with the audacious dramatist. The comedy therefore reappeared in the bills of the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon, where, notwithstanding a considerable advance in the prices of admission, it remained for four months, with two performances daily. According to Loret, it was much visited by all sorts of people. "It cost me only thirty sous to see it," he adds, "but I laughed to the value of more than ten pistoles." The

following extracts are fair specimens of Molière's humor:

ACT I. SCENE II.

Gorgibus, Du Croisy, La Grange.

*Gorgibus.*—Well, gentlemen, you have seen my niece and my daughter. How are matters going on? What is the result of your visit?

*La Grange.*—They will tell you this better than we can. All we can say is that we thank you for the favor you have done us, and remain your most humble servants.

*Du Croisy.*—Your most humble servants.

*Gorg.*—(Alone.) Hoity-toity! Methinks they go away dissatisfied. What can be the meaning of this? I must find it out. Within there!

SCENE III.

Gorgibus, Marotte.

*Marotte.*—Did you call, sir?

*Gorgibus.*—Where are your mistresses?

*Mar.*—In their room.

*Gorg.*—What are they doing there?

*Mar.*—Making lip salve.

*Gorg.*—There is no end of their salves. Bid them come down. (Alone.) These hussies with their salves have, I think, a mind to ruin me. Everywhere in the house I see nothing but whites of eggs, lac virginal and a thousand other fooleries I am not acquainted with. Since we have been here they have employed the lard of a dozen hogs at least, and four servants might live every day on the sheep's trotters they use.

SCENE IV.

Madelon, Cathos, Gorgibus.

*Gorgibus.*—Truly there is great need to spend so much money to grease your faces. Pray tell me, what have you done

to those gentlemen, that I saw them go away with so much coldness? Did I not order you to receive them as persons whom I intended for your husbands?

*Madelon*.—Dear father, what consideration do you wish us to entertain for the irregular behavior of these people?

*Cathos*.—How can a woman of ever so little understanding, uncle, reconcile herself to such individuals?

*Gorg*.—What fault have you to find with them?

*Mad*.—Theirs is fine gallantry, indeed. Would you believe it? they began with proposing marriage to us.

*Gorg*.—What would you have them begin with—with a proposal to keep you as mistresses? Is not their proposal a compliment to both of you, as well as to me? Can anything be more polite than this? And do they not prove the honesty of their intentions by wishing to enter these holy bonds?

*Mad*.—Oh, father! Nothing can be more vulgar than what you have just said. I am ashamed to hear you talk in such a manner; you should take some lessons in the elegant way of looking at things.

*Gorg*.—I care nothing for elegant ways. I tell you marriage is a holy and sacred affair; to begin with that is to act like honest people.

*Mad*.—Good Heavens! If everybody was like you, a love-story would soon be over. What a fine thing it would have been if Cyrus had immediately espoused Mandane, and if Aronce had been married all at once to Clélie!

*Gorg*.—What is she jabbering about?

*Mad*.—Here is my cousin, father, who will tell you as well as I that matrimony ought never to happen till after other adventures. A lover, to be agreeable, must understand how to utter fine sentiments, to breathe soft, tender and passionate vows; his courtship must be according to the rules. In the first place, he should behold the fair one of whom he becomes enamored either at a place of worship, or when out walking, or at some public ceremony; or else he should be introduced to her by a relative or a friend, as if by chance, and when he leaves her he should appear in a pensive and melancholy mood. For some time he should conceal his passion from the

object of his love, but pay her several visits, in every one of which he ought to introduce some gallant subject to exercise the wits of all the company. When the day comes to make his declaration—which generally should be contrived in some shady garden-walk while the company is at a distance—it should be quickly followed by anger, which is shown by our blushing, and which, for a while, banishes the lover from our presence. He finds afterward means to pacify us, to accustom us gradually to hear him depict his passion, and to draw from us that confession which causes us so much pain. After that come the adventures, the rivals who thwart mutual inclination, the persecutions of fathers, the jealousies arising without any foundation, complaints, despair, running away, and its consequences. Thus things are carried on in fashionable life, and veritable gallantry cannot dispense with these forms. But to come out point-blank with a proposal of marriage—to make no love but with a marriage-contract, and begin a novel at the wrong end! Once more, father, nothing can be more tradesmanlike, and the mere thought of it makes me sick at heart.

*Gorg.*—What deuced nonsense is all this? That is high-flown language with a vengeance!

*Cath.*—Indeed, uncle, my cousin hits the nail on the head. How can we receive kindly those who are so awkward in gallantry? I could lay a wager they have not even seen a map of the country of Tenderness, and that love-letters, trifling attentions, polite epistles and sprightly verses are regions to them unknown. Do you not see that their whole person shows it, and that their external appearance is not such as to give at first sight a good opinion of them? To come and pay a visit to the object of their love with a leg without any ornaments, a hat without any feathers, a head with its locks not artistically arranged, and a coat that suffers from a paucity of ribbons! Heavens! what lovers are these! what stinginess in dress! what barrenness of conversation! It is not to be allowed; it is not to be borne. I also observed that their ruffs were not made by the fashionable milliner, and that their breeches were not big enough by more than half a foot.

*Gorg.*—I think they are both mad, nor can I understand anything of this gibberish. Cathos, and you, Madelon . . . .



*Mad.*—Pray, father, do not use those strange names, and call us by some other.

*Gorg.*—What do you mean by those strange names? Are they not the names your godfathers and godmothers gave you?

*Mad.*—Good Heavens! how vulgar you are! I confess I wonder you could possibly be the father of such an intelligent girl as I am. Did ever anybody in genteel style talk of Cathos or of Madelon? And must you not admit that either of these names would be sufficient to disgrace the finest novel in the world?

*Cath.*—It is true, uncle, an ear rather delicate suffers extremely at hearing these words pronounced, and the name of Polixena, which my cousin has chosen, and that of Amintha, which I took, possess a charm which you must needs acknowledge.

*Gorg.*—Hearken; one word will suffice. I do not allow you to take any other names than those that were given you by your godfathers and godmothers; and as for those gentlemen we are speaking about, I know their families and fortunes, and am determined they shall be your husbands. I am tired of having you upon my hands. Looking after a couple of girls is rather too weighty a charge for a man of my years.

*Cath.*—As for me, uncle, all I can say is, that I think marriage a very shocking business. How can one endure the thought of lying by the side of a man who is really naked?

*Mad.*—Give us leave to take breath for a short time among the fashionable world of Paris, where we are but just arrived. Allow us to prepare at our leisure the groundwork of our novel, and do not hurry on the conclusion too abruptly.

*Gorg.*—(Aside.) I cannot doubt it any longer; they are completely mad. (Aloud.) Once more I tell you I understand nothing of all this gibberish; I will be master, and to cut short all kinds of arguments, either you shall both be married shortly, or, upon my word, you shall be nuns; that I swear.



## SCENE VI.

Cathos, Madelon.

*Cathos.*—Good Heavens, my dear, how deeply is your father still immersed in material things! how dense is his understanding, and what gloom overcasts his soul!

*Madelon.*—What can I do, my dear? I am ashamed of him. I can hardly persuade myself I am indeed his daughter; I believe that an accident, some time or other, will discover me to be of a more illustrious descent.

*Cath.*—I believe it; really, it is very likely; as for me, when I consider myself . . . .

## SCENE VII.

Cathos, Madelon, Marotte (their maid).

*Marotte.*—Here is a footman asks if you are at home, and says his master is coming to see you.

*Madelon.*—Learn, you dunce, to express yourself a little less vulgarly. Say, Here is a necessary evil inquiring if it is commodious for you to become visible.

*Mar.*—I do not understand Latin, and have not learned philosophy out of Cyrus, as you have done.

*Mad.*—Impertinent creature! How can this be borne! And who is this footman's master?

*Mar.*—He told me it was the marquis de Mascarille.

*Mad.*—Ah, my dear! A marquis! a marquis! Well, go and tell him we are visible. This is certainly some wit who has heard of us.

*Cathos.*—Undoubtedly, my dear.

*Mad.*—We had better receive him here in this parlor than in our room. Let us at least arrange our hair a little, and maintain our reputation. Come in quickly, and reach us the Counsellor of the Graces.

*Mar.*—Upon my word, I do not know what sort of a beast

that is; you must speak like a Christian if you would have me know your meaning.

*Cath.*—Bring us the looking-glass, you blockhead! and take care not to contaminate its brightness by the communication of your image.

#### SCENE X.

Madelon, Cathos, Mascarille, Almanzor (a lackey).

*Mascarille.*—(After having bowed to them.) Ladies, no doubt you will be surprised at the boldness of my visit, but your reputation has drawn this disagreeable affair upon you; merit has for me such potent charms that I run everywhere after it.

*Madelon.*—If you pursue merit, you should not come to us.

*Cathos.*—If you find merit among us, you must have brought it hither yourself.

*Masc.*—Ah! I protest against these words. When fame mentioned your deserts it only spoke the truth.

*Mad.*—Your complaisance goes a little too far in the liberality of its praises, and my cousin and I must take care not to give too much credit to your sweet adulation.

*Cath.*—My dear, we should call for chairs.

*Mad.*—Almanzor!

*Almanzor.*—Madam.

*Mad.*—Convey to us hither, instantly, the conveniences of conversation. (Exit Almanzor.)

*Masc.*—But am I safe here?

*Cath.*—What is it you fear?

*Masc.*—Some larceny of my heart; some massacre of liberty. I behold here a pair of eyes that seem to be very naughty boys, that insult liberty and use a heart most barbarously. Why the deuce do they put themselves on their guard, in order to kill any one who comes near them? Upon my word! I mistrust them; I shall either scamper away or expect very good security that they do me no mischief.

*Mad.*—My dear, what a charming facetiousness he has!

*Cath.*—I see, indeed, he is an Amilcar. (One of the heroes of *Cécile*, who would be thought sprightly.)

*Mad.*—Fear nothing; our eyes have no wicked designs, and your heart may rest in peace, fully assured of their innocence.

*Cath.*—But, pray, sir, be not inexorable to the easy chair, which for this last quarter of an hour has held out its arms to you; yield to its desire of embracing you.

*Masc.*—Well, ladies, and what do you think of Paris?

*Mad.*—Alas! what can we think of it? It would be the very antipodes of reason not to confess that Paris is the grand cabinet of marvels, the centre of good taste, wit and gallantry.

*Masc.*—As for me, I maintain that, out of Paris, there is no salvation for the polite world.

*Cath.*—Most assuredly.

*Masc.*—Paris is somewhat muddy; but then we have sedan chairs.

*Mad.*—To be sure; a sedan chair is a wonderful protection against the insults of mud and bad weather.

*Masc.*—I am sure you receive many visits. What great wit belongs to your company?

*Mad.*—Alas! we are not yet known, but we are in the way of being so; for a lady of our acquaintance has promised us to bring all the gentlemen who have written for the *Miscellanies of Select Poetry*.

*Cath.*—And certain others who, we have been told, are likewise the sovereign arbiters of all that is handsome.

*Masc.*—I can manage this for you better than any one; they all visit me, and I may say that I never rise without having half a dozen wits at my levée.

*Mad.*—Good Heavens! you will place us under the greatest obligation if you will do us the kindness; for, in short, we must make the acquaintance of all those gentlemen if we wish to belong to the fashion. They are the persons who can make or unmake a reputation at Paris; you know that there are some whose visits alone are sufficient to start the report that you are a *connaissanceuse* though there should be no other reason for it. As for me, what I value particularly is that, by

means of these ingenious visits, we learn a hundred things which we ought necessarily to know, and which are the quintessence of wit. Through them we hear the scandal of the day, or whatever niceties are going on in prose or verse.

*Cath.*—Indeed, I think it the height of ridicule for any one who possesses the slightest claim to be called clever not to know even the smallest couplet that is made every day.

*Masc.*—It is really a shame not to know from the very first all that is going on; but do not give yourself any further trouble; I will establish an academy of wits at your house, and I give you my word that not a single line of poetry shall be written in Paris but what you shall be able to say by heart before anybody else. As for me, such as you see me, I amuse myself in that way when I am in the humor, and you may find handed about in the fashionable assemblies of Paris two hundred songs, as many sonnets, four hundred epigrams, and more than a thousand madrigals, all made by me, without counting riddles and portraits.

*Mad.*—I must acknowledge that I dote on portraits; I think there is nothing more gallant.

*Masc.*—Portraits are difficult, and call for great wit; you shall see some of mine that will not displease you.

*Cath.*—As for me, I am awfully fond of riddles.

*Masc.*—They exercise the intelligence; I have already written four of them this morning, which I will give you to guess.

*Mad.*—Madrigals are pretty enough when they are neatly turned.

*Masc.*—That is my special talent; I am at present engaged in turning the whole Roman history into madrigals.

*Mad.*—Goodness gracious! that will certainly be superlatively fine; I should like to have one copy at least, if you think of publishing it.

*Masc.*—I promise you each a copy, bound in the handsomest manner. It does not become a man of my rank to scribble, but I do it only to serve the publishers, who are always bothering me.

*Mad.*—I fancy it must be a delightful thing to see one's self in print

*Masc.*—Undoubtedly; but, by the by, I must repeat to you some extempore verses I made yesterday at the house of a certain duchess, an acquaintance of mine. I am deuced clever at extempore verses.

*Cath.*—Extempore verses are certainly the very touchstone of genius.

*Masc.*—Listen then.

*Mad.*—We are all ears.

*Masc.*— Oh! oh! quite without heed was I,  
As harmless you I chanced to spy,  
Slyly your eyes  
My heart surprise.  
Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief! I cry.

*Cath.*—Good Heavens! this is carried to the utmost pitch of gallantry.

*Masc.*—Everything I do shows it is done by a gentleman; there is nothing of the pedant about my effusions.

*Mad.*—They are more than two thousand miles removed from that.

*Cath.*—What a passion there breathes in this music! It is enough to make one die away with delight!

*Mad.*—There is something plaintive in it.

*Masc.*—Do you not think that the air perfectly well expresses the sentiment, stop thief, stop thief! And then, as if some one cried out very loud, Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop thief! Then all at once like a person out of breath, Stop thief!

*Mad.*—This is to understand the perfection of things, the grand perfection, the perfection of perfections. I declare it is altogether a wonderful performance. I am quite enchanted with the air and the words.

*Cath.*—I never yet met with anything so excellent.

*Masc.*—All that I do comes naturally to me; it is without study.

*Mad.*—Nature has treated you like a very fond mother; you are her darling child.

*Masc.*—How do you pass away the time, ladies?

*Cath.*—With nothing at all.

*Mad.*—Until now we have lived in a terrible dearth of amusements.

*Masc.*—I am at your service to attend you to the play, one of those days, if you will permit me. Indeed, a new comedy is to be acted which I should be very glad we might see together.

*Mad.*—There is no refusing you anything.

*Masc.*—I do not know whether I am deceived, but you look as if you had written some play yourself.

*Mad.*—Eh! there may be something in what you say.

*Masc.*—Ah! upon my word, we must see it. Between ourselves, I have written one which I intend to have brought out.

*Cath.*—Ay! to what company do you mean to give it?

*Masc.*—That is a very nice question, indeed. To the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne; they alone can bring things into good repute; the rest are ignorant creatures who recite their parts just as people speak in every-day life; they do not understand to mouth the verses or to pause at a beautiful passage; how can it be known where the fine lines are, if an actor does not stop at them, and thereby tell you to applaud heartily?

*Cath.*—Indeed! that is one way of making an audience feel the beauties of any work; things are only prized when they are well set off.

*Masc.*—What do you think of my top-knot, sword-knot and rosettes? Do you find them harmonize with my coat?

*Cath.*—Perfectly.

*Masc.*—Do you think the ribbon well chosen?

*Mad.*—Furlously well. It is real Perdrigeon.

*Masc.*—What do you say of my rolls?

*Mad.*—They look very fashionable.

*Masc.*—I may at least boast that they are a quarter of a yard wider than any that have been made.

*Mad.*—I must own I never saw the elegance of dress carried farther.

*Masc.*—Please to fasten the reflection of your smelling faculty upon these gloves.

*Mad.*—They smell awfully fine.

*Cath.*—I never inhaled a more delicious perfume.

*Masc.*—And this? (He gives them his powdered wig to smell.)

*Mad.*—It has the true quality odor; it titillates the nerves of the upper region most deliciously.

*Masc.*—You say nothing of my feathers. How do you like them?

*Cath.*—They are frightfully beautiful.

*Masc.*—Do you know that every single one of them cost me a Louis d'or? But it is my hobby to have generally everything of the very best.

*Mad.*—I assure you that you and I sympathize. I am furiously particular in everything I wear; I cannot endure even stockings, unless they are bought at a fashionable shop.

Such expressions as “furiously well,” “frightfully beautiful,” it may be explained, were among the common phraseology of the précieuses, and have their counterpart at the present time among English-speaking people, as in “awfully jolly,” “awfully nice.”

In the last scenes Du Croisy and La Grange appear and expose the deception of the valets, to whom they administer a sound beating. Finally Gorgibus takes to task his daughter and niece in the presence of Mascarille and Jodelet, who dubs himself viscount:

*Gorgibus.*—Ah! you hussies, you have put us in a nice pickle by what I can see; I have heard about your fine goings-on from those two gentlemen who just left.

*Madelon.*—Ah, father! they have played us a cruel trick.

*Gorg.*—Yes, it is a cruel trick, but you may thank your own impertinence for it, you jades. They have revenged themselves for the way you treated them; and yet, unhappy man that I am, I must put up with the affront.



*Mad.*—Ah! I swear we will be revenged, or I shall die in the attempt. And you, rascals, dare you remain here after your insolence?

*Masc.*—Do you treat a marquis in this manner? This is the way of the world; the least misfortune causes us to be slighted by those who before caressed us. Come along, brother, let us go and seek our fortune somewhere else; I perceive they love nothing here but outward show, and have no regard for worth unadorned.

In the concluding scene one of the musicians summoned for an extempore ball asks Gorgibus for their pay, which they receive in rather an unexpected manner:

Sir, as they have not paid us, we expect you to do so, for it was in this house we played.

*Gorgibus.*—(Beating them.) Yes, yes, I shall satisfy you; this is the coin I will pay you in. As for you, you sluts, I do not know why I should not serve you in the same way; we shall become the common talk and laughing-stock of everybody; this is what you have brought upon yourselves by your fooleries. Out of my sight and hide yourselves, you jades; go and hide yourselves forever. (Alone.) And you, that are the cause of their folly, you stupid trash, mischievous amusements for idle minds, you novels, verses, songs, sonnets, and sonatas, the devil take you all!

*Les Précieuses Ridicules* sounded the knell of the mania it had assailed. The worshippers at the shrine of Madame de Rambouillet resumed their baptismal names, condescended to use fairly intelligible language, and otherwise showed that the satire of Molière, with the merriment it excited, had the power to change them for the better. But, as may be supposed, they exhibited no

little resentment at the indignity to which they had been exposed. The dramatist was loudly reproached with a disregard of the courtesy due to women, of the charms of refined sentiment, of the decencies of speech and conduct. It seemed to be thought that, if such plays were to be tolerated, the end of all things was at hand. Molière was in a position to behold the storm without apprehension, but his good-nature prompted him to lessen the pain he had inflicted. "The most excellent things," he wrote in the preface to the authorized edition of the comedy, "are liable to be copied by apes, and the true précieuses are wrong to take offense at a representation of those who imitate them so badly." If the wrath of the blue-stockings was turned away by his courtesy, they could not have been very keen-sighted, as the butt of the satire was not so much the eccentricities of Madelon and Cathos as the model to which those unhappy girls conform. In truth, Molière had no intention to abandon the unofficial censorship he had assumed. His strength, as he now saw, lay in holding up, in satirical comedy, the mirror to the Paris of his time. "Henceforth," he said, "I shall do better to study the world than Menander, Terence, Plautus and the modern Italian drama."

#### Competition of Parisian Theatres.

In view of the approaching withdrawal of *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, Molière began to look about him for new plays by old hands. Marked as his success had been, and great as was the facility with which he wrote, he did not shut his eyes to the impolicy of allowing the fortunes

of his theatre to depend exclusively upon his own productions. From the outset, however, he attracted no dramatist of repute to his standard. The troupes of the Bourgogne and the Marais made it known that if any one wrote for the Petit Bourbon he would forfeit their good-will. No rising author could afford to disregard such a menace, while those who were in a position to do so may well have hesitated to intrust their manuscript to a body of players who, as far as tragedy was concerned, were the least efficient in the capital.

Having thus, as they thought, checkmated Molière, the players of the Bourgogne, as a means of competing with him on his chosen ground, induced a number of the actors of the Marais to join them. In their selection of novelties, however, they still manifested a preference for tragedy. Thomas Corneille, who for some years past had devoted himself to the Marais, wrote for the Bourgogne a *Darius*, perhaps the least interesting of all his works, and certainly not strong enough to bear the weight of five acts. Soon afterward, however, he redeemed this failure by *Stilicon*, a play admirable in point of construction, and forming altogether a vivid picture of Rome at a striking period of her history. Quinault was less fortunate in a *Stratonice*, while another effort of the abbé Boyer, *La Mort de Démétrius, ou le Rétablissement d'Alexandre, Roi d'Epire*, is remarkable only for the length of its title. In the way of comedy the troupe had nothing better to produce than *Le Mariage de Rien*, which may be described as an attempt to relieve the most oppressive dulness by indecency. It was from the pen of Antoine Jacob de Montfleuri, eldest son of

the actor of that name. Educated for the legal profession, ambition led him to dramatic authorship, apparently with the object of proving that the most sacred ties are fit subjects for indecent mirth on the stage. In the midst of these pursuits he espoused a daughter of Floridor, a model of every virtue.

### Sganarelle.

Molière was now to show that, with all the dramatists of the day at their back, the Troupe Royale, as the players at the Bourgogne styled themselves, could not equal him in popularity. The second comedy he wrote in Paris, *Sganarelle, ou le Cocu Imaginaire*, brought large audiences to the Petit Bourbon. Working upon a story derived from an Italian farce, *Il Cornuto per Opinione*, he painted a humorous picture of bourgeoisie life, brightened in many places by touches of sarcasm at the expense of popular follies. In substance the play is one of intrigue, but at least one of the characters is original and strongly individualized. Sganarelle, whose unfounded suspicions as to his wife's fidelity form the *raison d'être* of the plot, is a citizen of the most vulgar stamp—gross in his tastes, self-opinionated, at once cunning and credulous, too much of a poltroon to resent his fancied wrongs, but withal endowed with a certain broad humor which is irresistible. He was as new a figure on the stage as Crispin had been, but far more natural. Molière himself played the part, supported by Mdlle. Debrie as the wife, La Grange as the supposed seducer, and Duparc as the hungry valet. While inferior in all respects

except style to *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, *Sganarelle* at once proved popular, and, though brought out at a time when Paris was half deserted, was repeated forty times in succession; a triumph whose significance could not be misunderstood when compared with that of a really superior play introduced at a far more propitious season.

### *La Toison D'Or.*

The period now under consideration was marked by great public rejoicings. The war between France and Spain had come to a close, and soon afterward Louis XIV espoused the Infanta Maria Theresa. In the summer, when the marriage was solemnized in the far south, and in the beginning of September, when the young king and queen entered Paris in all the pomp and pride of royalty, the enthusiasm of the populace knew no bounds. Business was entirely suspended; cheers rent the air as his majesty passed by, and at all the theatres in the capital performances were given gratuitously. Nearly every château in the country, also, assumed a festive appearance. The play-loving marquis de Sourdéac entertained more than five hundred guests at Neubourg for eight days, in the course of which a new tragedy from the pen of Corneille, *La Toison d'Or*, was played by the actors of the Marais. Picturesquely put upon the stage, with dances and music, and written throughout, like *Andromède*, with remarkable grace of imagery and diction, it was received with warm acclamations, and in due time was added to the entertainments of the capital, where, aided by the original dresses and decorations presented

to the comedians by Sourdéac, it became "the wonder of the city."

#### Death of Jodelet and Scarron.

While the rejoicings on account of the king's marriage were in progress the Bourgogne lost its best comic actor in the person of Jodelet. He does not seem to have been keenly regretted by his fellow-players; for the broad humor which formerly distinguished his acting had appreciably diminished as old age came upon him, and his temper, at no time very suave, had not been improved by the consciousness of his decline. Hardly had the grave closed over him, when it reopened to receive the writer whose fantastic conceptions it had been his mission to embody. From the time of the production of *Le Marquis Ridicule*, the bodily infirmities of Scarron had visibly increased, and soon it became evident that his end was near. But even the approach of death could not subdue his characteristic levity. In his last hours he dictated the most farcical of wills. He bequeathed to his wife permission to marry again, certainly never dreaming who her second husband was to be; to the Academy, power to alter the French language at will; to his servants, pensions on the many bon-mots he had made; to the two Corneilles, five hundred pounds of patience; to Boileau, in addition to some caustic epigrams against him, gangrene and the haut mal. The testator died on the same day, having only a few minutes previously remarked to his servants, who came to his bedside with tears in their eyes, "Ah, my children, I shall never make you cry as I have made you laugh!"

His body, long distorted by pain, was laid in Saint Sauveur's, where a simple tablet was erected to his memory. He left his wife in poverty, but after many attempts his friends procured for her a continuance of the pension her husband had received from Anne of Austria. It is no slight testimony to Scarron's good qualities that he won the love and esteem of the high-minded woman who bore his name. In one of her letters she speaks warmly of his probity, his disinterestedness, his kindness of nature. "He was excellent at heart," she says, "and his license I succeeded in correcting."

### *The Theatre Palais Royal.*

The Hôtel du Petit Bourbon was now being pulled down to make way for the colonnade of the Louvre, and Molière's company, with the Italian players, received permission to take up their quarters in the superb theatre which Richelieu had fitted up in the Palais Royal for the representation of *Mirame*. Here they acted, as their opening piece, *Don Garcie de Navarre*, a comédie héroïque by their chief. In writing this play, which is of Spanish origin, Molière was evidently anxious to show that his powers as a dramatist and an actor were not restricted to the domain of light or farcical comedy. He treated in an elevated spirit the passion which *Sganarelle* had held up to ridicule. He delineated, in the character of the hero, a prince with rare qualities of head and heart, but reduced to extreme misery by a sensitively jealous nature. Every scene bears the impress of thoughtful and thorough workmanship. But the result



was not what he had a right to expect. Had the piece been converted into a tragedy, it might have succeeded by reason of the grave and stately eloquence of the writing; as it was, the bulk of the audience, having assembled in the expectation of seeing another *Précieuses* or *Sganarelle*, were led in their disappointment to pronounce it gloomy and uninteresting. Thus far French audiences had been accustomed only to the lighter forms of comedy, and a play such as *Don Garcie*, which was somewhat of the cloak and sword order of the Spanish drama, was entirely foreign to their tastes.

It was about this time that Molière and his troupe received orders to give a performance of *L'Étourdi* and *Les Précieuses Ridicules* at the Louvre in the presence of Mazarin, who, followed by the king, was wheeled on a sofa into the salle in which the players appeared. It is somewhat remarkable that an amusement relentlessly persecuted by the church of Rome should have been resorted to by a cardinal in what he must have known were his last hours. The distress with which the minister contemplated the approach of death was also relieved by the fact that something had been done toward naturalizing the opera in France. Two years before, the abbé Perrin, a hanger-on of Gaston D'Orleans, had composed a work of this kind in French, *La Pastorale*, to which music was set by Lambert, intendant de la musique to Anne of Austria. It was sung at Issy, and Mazarin had it played more than once in the presence of the king. The innovation, however, did not find favor except in a very limited circle, and even those who appreciated the opera maintained that the genius of the French language would

not lend itself to the purpose; nor do we find to-day anything of superior merit, except in comic opera.

*Armande Béjart.*

Molière, who seems to have found in Mazarin a zealous admirer, now proceeded to write a comedy in which a young actress lately added to his company might be introduced. This was Armande Clarie Elizabeth Béjart, a younger sister of Madeleine, to whose care she had been confided in early life, growing to womanhood—for woman she already was—under the eyes of Molière. Charmed with her girlish graces, he took upon himself the cost of her education, and few tasks gave him greater pleasure than that of preparing her for the stage. Her portrait has been painted for us in one of his own dialogues. “Her eyes,” he says, “are not large, but are full of fire—the most brilliant, the most piercing, the most moving that can be seen. Her mouth is large, but has attractions peculiar to itself. She is not tall, but her movements are easy and elegant. She affects a nonchalance in her speech and deportment, but there is grace in all, and her manners have a nameless charm. Her wit is of the finest and most delicate kind; her conversation is delightful; and if she is capricious, as I admit she is—well, everything becomes and must be borne with from the fair.” This description is substantially confirmed by contemporary testimony, from which we further learn that she had an extremely pretty voice, sang with taste in both French and Italian, dressed gracefully, was a mistress of the art of filling up the intervals of her part.

on the stage with expressive by-play, and could impersonate coquettish or satirical women to perfection.

### L'École des Maris.

The comedy designed by Molière in the interest of his youthful comrade was produced under the title of *L'École des Maris*. It threw all his previous achievements into the shade, whether as regards character, plot, situation or dialogue. In selecting his materials he would appear to have had in mind the *Adelphi* of Plautus and Lopé de Vega's *Discreta Enamorada*. His obligation to these works, however, was slight, as a comparison of them with *L'École* will show. Two brothers, Ariste and Sganarelle, with Molière as the latter, are respectively guardians of two sisters, Léonor and Isabelle, the former personated by Armande Béjart. Each intends to espouse his ward, but treats her in a different way. Ariste, reposing implicit confidence in Léonor, concedes her full liberty of action; Sganarelle, suspicious and tyrannical, seeks to cut off Isabelle from all intercourse with the world. The wisdom of Ariste is justified by the event; but the other suitor, in addition to forfeiting any regard Isabelle may have had for him, is made a go-between for the benefit of a more favored lover, whose name is Valèrie. In many points this groundwork is new, and for all that constitutes the excellence of the play, especially the robust manliness and good sense of Ariste, the delicacy with which Isabelle is exhibited in difficult circumstances, and the piquancy of the character of the soubrette, as played

by Madeleine Béjart, Molière was indebted only to his own genius. For the rest, *L'École des Maris* was triumphantly successful. Loret tells us that it became the "delight of all Paris." Not long afterward it was represented by the same players before the court at Vaux, where, as in the capital, it added to the reputation of the dramatist.

Molière's reputation was already high enough to compensate him for the sacrifices he had made to obtain it. In the comedy of character and incident he had left Corneille far behind, at the same time infusing into his dialogue a vivacity and grace not to be found in that of the author of *Cinna* and *Polyeucte*. Indeed, it is not too much to say that *L'École des Maris* gave its author a place in the very foremost rank of comic poets, and from this time a new play from his pen was looked forward to with the keenest interest. Still more rapid, perhaps, was the progress he made at court. It required less intelligence than Louis XIV possessed to perceive that Molière would add to the glories of the reign just begun, and his admiration of the dramatist was not improbably blended with a feeling of strong personal regard for one whose noble qualities of heart were as conspicuous as his intellectual gifts, whose conversation and manners were those of a lettered gentleman, and who bore himself in the presence of his sovereign with a deference wholly free from the taint of servility. In the words of Bazin, "Molière was now to enjoy something more than a disdainful protection at the hands of the king. From the moment these two men—the one a monarch freed from leading-strings, the other an unrivalled comedian but still

timid moralist—became well acquainted, a tacit understanding subsisted between them—an understanding that the latter might dare everything, with full assurance of protection, upon the sole condition of respecting and amusing the former. No public treaty to which the faith of a monarch is solemnly pledged could have been fulfilled more sincerely; at no time, and in no circumstances, was the shield thrown over the poet withdrawn. He was no poor knight-errant, pursuing his mission at his own risk and peril, exposed to vengeance and apprehensive of being abandoned to his fate. He received confidence and strength from a caprice, for once enlightened, of sovereign power; his genius gave him all the rest.”

#### *The Court of Louis XIV.*

Before long, as a consequence of the esteem in which Molière was held at the Louvre, the drama assumed a new importance and dignity. Emancipated by the death of Mazarin from even the semblance of tutelage, Louis XIV, already distinguished by the calculating sagacity of a practical statesman, became the real as well as the nominal master of France, and it is no mere figure of speech to say that from this moment he was the cynosure of all eyes in Europe. For one thing, he made his court one of the most splendid on record. It seemed to comprise all that was picturesque and great in the life of the nation he represented. The nobles, humbled by Richelieu as a political force, but as little able to lay aside their old insolence of demeanor as to improve their morals, came from their châteaux to bask

in the sunshine of royalty; men of approved genius, no matter in what field they had shown it, were invited to swell the throng on a footing of something like equality. His majesty became the centre of a never-ending circle of edifying or frivolous pleasure, although he devoted himself for several hours a day to the business of the State. Palace life seemed to be made up of fêtes, pageants, theatrical performances, presentations and the most ingenious forms of enjoyment. "In short," says Madame de Sévigné, "it was a very whirlwind: illuminations and jewels, dresses faced and embroidered with gold, dissipation and idle compliments, civilities without thought, feet entangled in trains, traffic congested, lighted torches, people crushed under the wheels of coaches."

It is unnecessary to descant upon the widespread misery which the profusion of the king, joined to his insatiable thirst for conquest and military fame, brought upon the country at large. From the outset, however, his reign was fraught with benefits to civilization. Neglected as his education had been, he took a keen and practical interest in literature and art, especially when, as in the representation of a great play, they went hand in hand. Until recently, indeed, the theatrical diversions of the court consisted almost exclusively of Ben-serade's allegorical ballets, in which his majesty, with other members of the royal family, not infrequently appeared. But Molière aroused in him a taste for stage productions of a higher order; tragedy and comedy figured in most of the fêtes which he gave or attended, and the drama could not but derive additional lustre



from the homage paid to it by a prince who personified the France of his time in so imposing a fashion as to make himself an object of reverence to his plundered and down-trodden people.

### *Les fâcheux.*

Molière was now to be associated with an incident of historic interest. Fouquet, heir-presumptive to Mazarin, entertained the court at Vaux, when *Les Fâcheux*, a comedy in three acts, was played in a theatre created under the stately fir trees in the park. It may well be believed that murmurs of surprise and delight were heard among the brilliant assemblage in the parterre as the curtain rose. *Mirame* itself was not put upon the stage with so much magnificence as this new play of Molière's. The one scene of the piece, representing a garden, had been designed by Lenôtre, painted by Lebrun and ornamented with sculptured fountains, all in play, by Puget or Couston. Contrived by Torelli, who acted as stage manager, a huge rock in the background transformed itself into a shell, from which a naiad—Armande Béjart—came forth to deliver a prologue written by Pelisson.

But the admiration excited by this charming picture was soon to be displaced by a different feeling, at least among the bulk of the audience. *Les Fâcheux*, which had been "conceived, written, and got ready for representation" in the short space of fifteen days, was found to be a refined but incisive satire upon the very class of which that audience was mainly composed. In one of



Scaramouche's farces some amusement had been created by the spectacle of a lover interrupted by a succession of insufferable bores on his way to a rendezvous. Molière made use in his new piece of a similar groundwork, at the same time turning the figures of those who beset his hero, Eraste—played by himself—into full-length portraits of typical personages in the king's train, and using them as stalking-horses for ridicule upon more than one conceit and folly. Now we have a beribboned and feathered gallant noisily taking a seat on the stage in the sight of the audience, while the performance is going on; now an amateur composer insists upon singing some dance music he has written; now a gamester pertinaciously enters into a description of a point in piquet; now a pair of précieuses are anxious to know whether a lover ought to be jealous; now a pedant is anxious that a petition regarding himself shall be presented to the king; now a duellist wishes to prove himself cunning of fence by defending friends from imaginary attacks; to crown all, a bore inflicts upon us an account of having been himself bored.

In writing such a piece, of course, the dramatist acted upon an assumption that his temerity would be applauded by the king, who, to say nothing of his delight in annoying others, had been animated from boyhood by a desire to bring the authority of the nobles within narrow limits. Nor did this assumption prove groundless. His majesty readily entered into the humor of the piece, chiefly by reason of the speechless dismay and confusion shown by many of his courtiers under the castigation inflicted upon them from the stage. His

pleasure, indeed, may be said to have increased in proportion to their pain. The only fault he found with the satire was that it did not go far enough. "M. de Molière," he whispered at the close, looking toward Soiecourt, the master of the hounds, "there is an 'original' you might well copy." Molière was not a master of the phraseology of the chase, but a brief conversation with the proposed victim taught him as much of it as would serve his purpose, and in the dead of night, after the guests had retired, he added to his list of bores the diverting character of the huntsman Dorante. Thus strengthened, *Les Fâcheux*, which presents a combination of two species of plays hitherto unknown but henceforward popular in France—the comédie-ballet and the pièce à tiroir—was performed at Fontainebleau and at the Palais Royal. It need hardly be said that the Bourgeoisie laughed most heartily at these burlesques of their superiors. The indignation of the latter was naturally very great, but as the piece was dedicated to the highest personage in the realm, and that in a tone which indicated a sense of perfect security, they deemed it prudent, at least for the present, to hold their peace on the subject.

#### Boursault.

The Hôtel de Bourgogne had nothing better to counterbalance the attraction of *Les Fâcheux* than two invertebrate tragedies by Thomas Corneille, *Pyrrhus* and *Maximian*. The afterpiece to each was *Le Médecin Volant*, the first essay in dramatic composition of a ris-

ing young writer. In 1651, having arrived at the mature age of thirteen, Edmond Boursault left his native village to push his fortune in Paris. He could neither read nor write, for his father, an illiterate soldier, was determined not to be outshone in the matter of education by his children. How the raw country lad contrived to keep his head above water in Paris we are not told, but it is certain that by dint of intense industry he repaired his want of education, and at this time he could write French with a purity and elegance which any scholar in the college might have envied. His first important enterprise was a gazette in rhyme, in imitation of Loret. Its success was greater than could have been anticipated; he was commanded to present a copy of each issue in person to the king, and a pension of two thousand livres was conferred upon him. Before long, however, this encouraging prospect was overclouded. In one of his gazettes, at the instance of the duc de Guise, now his steadiest patron, he indulged in a little pleasantry at the expense of a Capuchin who, while slumbering in the shop of a seamstress, had been converted by irreverent hands into something like an effigy of Guy Fawkes. The court was hugely diverted by the story, but the queen's Spanish confessor induced her to regard it as a mark of disrespect to religion, and to appease her resentment the king suppressed the work, cancelled the pension, and would have sent the author to the bastille, if Condé had not said a word in his favor.

Like Molière, Boursault was to learn that there must be no joking at the expense of the priesthood, and that he who sought to bring religion into disrespect would

do so at his peril. The drastic lesson that had been taught proved admonitory, at least for the time being.

### *Molière's Marriage.*

At this time was being enacted at the Palais Royal a pathetic drama of real life. For the last eight or nine years Catherine Debie had been Molière's wife in all but name, now consoling him under repeated disappointments, anon supporting him in his aspirations by intelligent sympathy, and generally making his happiness the chief, if not the sole object of her existence. He was the god of her idolatry—a god at whose shrine no self-sacrifice could be too great. Nor had he failed to appreciate this devotion; his attachment to her increased as time passed away, and would have led him to give her his hand if she had been free to accept it. But in the young actress just added to the company she was to find a too powerful rival. His friendly interest in Armande Béjart involuntarily ripened into a warmer sentiment. It was in vain that his better judgment warned him not to place his peace of mind at the mercy of a girl without fixed character, predisposed to frivolity, and nearly twenty-five years younger than himself. To use his own words, "It is not reason that regulates love," and the passion he conceived for her seemed to become a part of his very being. In extreme anguish, but without uttering a syllable of reproach, Mdlle. Debie unostentatiously quitted what she had made a home in the best sense of the word, and at the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, from which the signal for the St.

Bartholomew massacre had been given, Molière and Armande were married in the presence of his father, M. Poquelin, of the mother of the Bégarts, and most of the players of the Palais Royal.

It was soon manifest to the dramatist that his infatuation had led him into a terrible error. Instead of becoming what his fancy had painted, an affectionate and sympathetic companion, Armande showed that she had married him only from motives of self-interest. He found her to be heartless, vain, giddy and shallow-minded. She repaid his tenderness with undisguised indifference, saw nothing in his work except a means of gratifying her love of display, and took advantage of the liberty he gave her to become one of the most notorious coquettes on the outskirts of the court. If he complained of her conduct she would upbraid him as a tyrant or resort to impudent levity. Being remonstrated with on account of some undue familiarity with Lauzun, she protested that the scandal which associated his name with hers had no foundation, as it was the comte de Guiche she preferred. Molière, unhappily for himself, was of too sensitive a nature not to suffer intensely from the blow he had received. His life from this time was one of almost continuous torture. But his love for Armande seemed to increase as her worthlessness became more apparent; and accordingly, endeavoring to persuade himself that her faults were due in great measure to the thoughtlessness of youth, he left no stone unturned—with what success we shall see in due course—to inspire her with sentiments resembling his own. Apart from other objections, Molière was

many years her senior, so many that real sympathy between them was impossible.

### *Sertorius.*

A few days after the solemnization of this ill-assorted marriage, a tragedy by Corneille, *Sertorius*, was produced at the Marais, whose players had won his confidence by the effect with which they had represented *La Toison d'Or*. "Here," writes the once great dramatist, as though to show how completely he could stultify himself, "you will find neither tenderness, bursts of passion, elaborate descriptions nor pathetic narratives." In truth, *Sertorius* was another political tragedy, an historical dissertation in dramatic form. Viewed in this light, no doubt, it was deserving of praise. It was fully equal to the requirements of the subject, and the scene between Sertorius and Pompey in the third act had sufficient strength to give the piece a firm hold on public favor. In the military details, it should be added, the author was never at fault. "Where," asked one of the spectators, the great Turenne, "where can Corneille, an advocate and man of letters, have gained so much knowledge of the art of war as *Sertorius* displays?"

### *Death of Boisrobert.*

The aged poet was one of the last surviving members of the group of dramatists who had borne the yoke of Richelieu. Claude de l'Étoile and Colletet had passed away, soon afterward followed by Boisrobert—of late

years extremely corpulent, with his small eyes deeply sunk in his face. In most of the salons it was felt that Paris could better have spared a greater man than the virtual founder of the Académie Française. His numerous backslidings, if ever seriously thought of, were forgiven in consideration of the wit which had commended him to the notice of Richelieu, and which remained with him to the end. Nevertheless, those backslidings were of a nature to exclude him from the society of good men and true. He had lifted himself out of obscurity by persistent toadyism, had sought to disguise his weakness as a dramatist by plagiarisms sometimes involving a direct breach of confidence, and from the outset of his career had presented an example of about everything an abbé ought not to be. His liaison with one woman was so notorious that a friend ventured to remonstrate with him for disregarding his vows. "Is not the lady very ugly?" he asked. "She is." "Surely that proves my innocence." "On the contrary," retorted the friend, "her ugliness only aggravates your offense." Brought to the verge of the grave, however, the clerical rake began to fear that he had not regulated his doings with "sufficient exactitude," and it was in a profoundly repentant mood that he went to his long account.

*Mdlle. Desœillets.*

The Troupe Royal was now reinforced by a new and talented actress in the person of Mdlle. Desœillets. Nothing is known of the newcomer until she joined a provincial company, but it is probable that she was of



good birth, had received a liberal education and was playing under an assumed name. Both on and off the stage she displayed a refinement which must have been engrafted upon her in childhood. From the moment she took the lead at the Bourgogne she won the affection of her audience. More than forty years of age, she yet retained a very youthful appearance, and, if not beautiful in the ordinary sense of the term, was so picturesque that the eye followed her with pleasure, while the sensibilities of the heart were awakened by her utterances. Her acting was distinguished by pathos, finesse, earnestness, everything except the power needed to give due effect to characters like Camille and Cléopâtre. Her private life, moreover, was dignified by true womanliness. Bright without levity, benevolent without ostentation, quick to acknowledge merit in others, she may be compared in all respects save one to the unhappy lady who was now the observed of all observers at court—Louise de la Vallière.

### L'École des Femmes.

In order, perhaps, to counteract this rival attraction, as well as to find relief from his domestic woes, Molière wrote *L'École des Femmes*, which appeared at the Palais Royal as a Christmas novelty. It was the first time he had taken up the pen since Armande became his wife, and it is remarkable that, in his new comedy, as in the one produced when his passion for her was growing upon him, he resorted to the ethics of marriage for his materials. The chief personage in the piece,

Arnolphe, a middle-aged roué, played by Molière himself, has arrived at the conclusion, after a wide experience of womankind, that the best safeguard of a wife's honor is extreme ignorance, that if she is not to befool her husband she must be a fool herself. No girl should know anything except how to sew, pray, spin and love the man to whom she is pledged. Her library should consist of only two books, the *Bible* and the *Maxims of Marriage*. Nor does he fail to reduce these theories to rigid practice. Intending to espouse his ward Agnes—Mdlle. Debric—he has her brought up at a convent school in complete seclusion. But the young lady, while a type of intelligent simplicity, unconsciously outwits him; she bestows her affections upon the gallant Horace, and the guardian, after being made the confident of the latter, is eventually left out in the cold. The character of Arnolphe is finely contrasted with that of Chrysalde, who utters a series of noble sentiments in favor of the cultivation of the intellect in woman. It has been hastily assumed by some writers that Molière and his wife are before us in Arnolphe and Agnes. Far, indeed, is this from the truth, Armande bearing as little resemblance to the unsophisticated ward as her husband did to the tyrannical guardian. It is not improbable, however, that some of the most emotional passages in the play derived additional intensity of feeling and expression from his own experiences. In these, no doubt, the dramatist himself, rather than the character, is speaking. For a similar reason his acting may have gained in force and tenderness. However that may be, *L'École des Femmes*, especially toward the end,

was pervaded with a depth of sensibility which he had not previously displayed, and which, joined as it was to unequalled dramatic excellence, exerted a strong fascination over most of the audience.

The success was not without alloy. In some of the incidents and speeches of the new comedy, it would seem, the *précieuses* and the *fâcheux* saw a means of bringing odium upon their audacious assailant, and the temptation was not to be resisted. Vaguely denouncing the comedy as bad, they insisted that in writing it he had ridiculed manuals of devotion, sneered at the doctrine of punishment after death, caricatured the forms of a sermon, and degraded national morals and the national language.

Industriously repeated every night in the salons, the criticisms on *L'École des Femmes* were soon caught up outside, especially by those who are ever ready to calumniate an unusually successful man. But the dramatist's assailants were not allowed to have it all their own way. Boileau came forth against them, and his prowess as a satirist, now placed beyond question by the *Adieux*, insured attention to what he said. Molière's cause was also espoused in a pamphlet entitled *La Guerre Comique*. Here, as elsewhere, it was conclusively shown that he had not been guilty of either immodesty or impiety; but this by no means put an end to the controversy.

#### Critique de *L'École*.

Molière replied to his detractors by the *Critique de l'École des Femmes*, written as a dramatic dialogue, but

acted as a regular comedy. In this work he shows a self-command which may well excite surprise. Intense as was his provocation—for the jeers flung at him on account of his wife's misconduct had touched him to the quick—the play is free from any trace of malice. He never oversteps the limits of good taste; but within those limits he produced one of the most telling satires that was ever prepared for the stage. Climène, a précieuse, a coxcomb marquis, and Lysidas, a poetaster, successively assail *L'École des Femmes* in a conversation with three clear-headed persons—Uranie, Elise and Dorante. Climène's sense of decorum has been greatly shocked by certain passages in the play. "Nay," says Uranie, "you must have a sharp nose for secluded impropriety; I confess I saw none." "So much the worse for you." "So much the better, I think; I take things as they are presented to me, and do not turn them round to look for what should not be seen. A woman's modesty does not consist in grimacing. Nothing is more ridiculous than the delicacy which takes offense and gives criminal meaning to the most innocent words. The other night this affectation was carried so far by some ladies in the theatre that a lackey in the pit declared their ears to be more chaste than the rest of their persons." The marquis denounces the piece as "detestable, to the last degree detestable;" and Lysidas declaims against it because it violates all the rules of art. Dorante, without any want of respect for those rules, holds that a comedy justifies its existence when it pleases the audience, and Uranie is of opinion that the men best versed in Aristotle and Horace are those who write comedies which no one

can admire. For her part, she does not inquire whether the rules of Aristotle forbid her to laugh. "It is very strange," she adds, "that you writers always condemn the plays which every one goes to see and never speak well of any except those which fail." The defenders of *L'École* have the advantage in the argument throughout, one of them remarking that the author did not care how much his comedies were abused, so long as the town came to see them. Thanks to its wit and sarcasm, the *Critique* was represented more than thirty times in succession, a sure sign that Molière had not overestimated his strength in placing this singular piece before his audience. Devisé replied with a play similar in form and title, but it produced little effect, for, unlike the man whom he had assailed, he could not keep his temper, trying to compensate for the absence of wit by an abundance of coarse invective.

### **L'Impromptu de Versailles.**

Louis XIV, who took a keen interest in the controversy, requested Molière to bring his assailants on the stage at the newly erected palace at Versailles, and this he did in a play entitled *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, before an audience consisting largely of his intended victims. The chief weight of the satire fell upon the players of the Bourgogne, the author, besides making them feel his sarcasms, taking occasion to imitate some of their peculiarities. The piece was afterward transferred to the Palais Royal, where it caused a general roar of merriment, greatly to the discomfiture of those who were made

the objects of his ridicule. Molière's victims turned upon him with a rancor which plainly showed that his shafts were quivering in the centre of their mark. They replied with two pieces, neither of which was remarkable except for its abuse, and this they carried to such an extreme that few were disposed to make common cause with them. During one of the performances Molière entered the theatre, and, taking a seat at the side of the stage, eyed the movements of his mimics with a languid and half-amused curiosity which must have greatly disconcerted them.

### *Tartuffe.*

But a graver subject of satire was now to occupy the attention of Molière. No sign of the times was more conspicuous than the reaction against the anti-theological spirit which had found expression in the writings of Théophile Viaud, and later of Descartes. Intensified by the strife between Jesuits and Jansenists, this reaction soon bore down all opposition and the voice of skepticism was drowned in a chorus of real or affected acquiescence in the teachings of Revelation. In all quarters the odor of incense was to be perceived; the most worldly conversation was interlarded with images from and allusions to sacred books; piety again came into fashion, and it seemed as though the absorbing faith of the middle ages had once more returned. But the revival was attended with serious evils; the vice of self-seeking hypocrisy increased in proportion to the spread of virtue, and France was filled with men endeavoring to make a gain of godliness, even using religion as





*Orgon (Elmire's husband stopping Tartuffe): "You are too eager in your amorous transports, and you ought not to be so impetuous."*

TARTUFFE,—MOLIERE.





a cloak for designs which involve the dishonor of families.

To the task of checking this evil Molière now applied his keenest shafts of satire. In *Tartuffe*, a comedy in five acts, he relates the story of an attempt, by an irreclaimable hypocrite, to destroy the domestic happiness of a citizen who, charmed by his seeming piety, has received him as a prominent guest. In painting such a portrait, this lively assailant of Parisian foibles was in a new element, though one that proved to him perfectly congenial. His genius had a serious side, and on that side he was unquestionably at his best, the character of Tartuffe being drawn with a strength and precision which few dramatists have equalled. By a process of self-revelation, and almost without the aid of dialogue or soliloquy, the heart of a man who could neither desire nor endure any close investigation is discovered and ascertained in all its intricacies, with the certainty of navigators tracing the line and bearings of an unknown shore. In the delineation and grouping of the other personages, also, the instincts and power of a great artist are clearly revealed; nor does the author fail to avoid the pitfalls inseparable from such a subject. True religion is never confounded with hypocrisy, but is upheld with a warmth that suggests the fervor of his own religious sentiment, which shows his characteristic hatred of imposture in any shape.

The first three acts were produced during the fêtes held at Versailles, nominally in honor of the queen and Anne of Austria, but really to please the maid of honor who had now become the king's mistress. It would be

impossible to exaggerate the effect produced by this gruesome picture upon its first beholders—upon the mass of revelers who, resplendent in masquerade attire, filled the theatre in every part. Not only did the entertainment differ entirely from what they had expected, but the author, who seems to have been born to make the world laugh at itself, showed that he had also the power to confront them with one of the deepest mysteries of human existence.

The king at once perceived the genius displayed in *Tartuffe*, and was also clear-headed enough to see that it was aimed exclusively against hypocrisy; but from the moment it made its appearance in Paris another and heavier storm began to rage over the head of the dramatist. According to his assailants, he had at length thrown aside the mask altogether, and under pretense of exposing hypocrisy was seeking to undermine the foundations of religion itself. Roullés, the curé of Saint Barthélemy, took upon himself to damn the author of *Tartuffe* on his own authority, and another virulent denouncer of the play was the bishop of Autun, supposed to be the original of the stage impostor. The agitation steadily increased until the king deemed it prudent to prohibit the performance in Paris of a play which he had unreservedly approved.

Irritated by his disappointment, Molière registered a vow that, sooner or later, the interdiction should be set aside, and before long awakened such a friendly interest in his drama among the leaders of society as to induce the king to withdraw his prohibition. This was made the more easy by the anxiety of the fashionable world

to taste of the forbidden fruit, the salons competing with each other in their inducements to have *Tartuffe* read in the presence of a select audience; for "no greater pleasure," they said, "could be afforded them." Molière complied with many of these requests, inasmuch as they gave him an opportunity of dispelling the numberless misapprehensions in regard to his play, and of inspiring a wish to see it performed on the stage. His first private reading was before the pope's legate and a party of prelates, who, imagining *Tartuffe* to be a covert satire against the Jansenists—an idea which, however erroneous, the author took no pains to dispel—decided very strongly in its favor. The Jansenists placed on it an entirely different construction, while Molière, adroitly answering the questions put to him, managed to win over both sides, and that without suffering any twinges of conscience.

#### Infidelity of Molière's Wife.

In the course of these readings Molière suffered a blow which must have made him indifferent for a time to the fate of his play. Intoxicated by the success she had achieved, Armande had now disregarded the first of her obligations as a wife, one of those who were supposed to have corrupted her being the abbé de Richelieu. How keenly the husband felt his dishonor can hardly be told. Worthless as Armande was, she had aroused in him a lifelong passion, and he was of too fine and sensitive a nature to regard her faithlessness with the affected indifference and sangfroid of a man of the

world in the seventeenth century. At this painful juncture he formed a resolution that was at once dignified and generous. He would cease to treat her as a wife, but would not deprive her of the protection of his home. In other words, they would live in the same house, but would lead separate lives, and meet only at the theatre. This condition of affairs, however, he could not long endure, and in order to avoid meeting her unnecessarily, he took a villa at Auteuil, one of the prettiest suburbs of Paris, where he lived apart.

Apart from his wife's infidelity, Molière's worldly position at this moment was all that he could have desired. Not only did his popularity in Paris seem to increase with each successive day, but the favor of the court, which to him was a matter of paramount importance, was proof against every attempt to diminish it. On one occasion, it is said, he was invited by the king to join him at table—an honor rarely bestowed in the reign of Louis XIV.



## V.

### Racine and Molière.

While the splendid genius of Corneille was too evidently waning, and the brilliance of Molière was still at the zenith of its power, a new radiance dawned on the dramatic horizon. Racine, less original perhaps than Corneille, yet more uniform in excellence and even more conformed to the inmost spirit of French tragedy, rose to maintain in the mimic world of the theatre the glory of the reign of Louis XIV. To Corneille he bears the same relation that in English poetry the polished Pope bears to the more vigorous Dryden, or that in Greek tragedy Sophocles bears to Æschylus. His finely-wrought masterpieces are the typical examples of the French classic tragedy.

Jean Racine was born in 1639 at La Ferte-Milon, where his father was controller of the salt magazine and of the salt tax. Becoming an orphan in his fourth year, the boy was taken in charge by near relatives, and at the age of eleven or twelve was sent to the collège de Beauvais, proceeding thence to the monastery at Port Royal, whither his grandmother and two aunts had retired to devote themselves to piety and the education of youth.

Here he remained about four years, learning Greek from the sacristan, Claude Lancelot, who came to treat him as a son, and Latin and the humanities from Nicole. At times, it is to be feared, he proved a somewhat untractable pupil. Lancelot, having surprised him while reading the *Æthiopica*, a story hardly suited to one of his age, angrily threw the book into the fire; whereupon the youth immediately procured another copy, read it to the last line, and then, carrying it to the sacristan, sullenly remarked, "You may burn this as well." But impatience of restraint was not accompanied by a disinclination to study; on the contrary, his progress was rapid enough to awaken sanguine hopes as to his future. In the matter of Greek scholarship, it would seem, he learned more than Lancelot could teach him, burying himself in the woods to pore over Euripides and Sophocles, until he had acquired a deep insight into the predominating spirit of their plays. Bidding adieu to Port Royal, with its picturesque and venerable associations, he entered the collège d'Harcourt, there to study philosophy, being now the ward of a cousin, Nicholas Vitart, financial secretary to the duc de Luynes. A year or two later, when urged to choose a profession, he directed his attention by turns to law and theology. He had no taste for either; but in the end, probably at the solicitation of his friends at Port Royal, who did not wish to lose sight of so promising a pupil, he undertook to prepare himself for the church. Theology, as we shall see, was the profession to which Racine finally devoted himself, but at this time his tastes inclined to literature, and especially to dramatic literature, though well aware

that his powers were not yet sufficiently developed for the task.

### Early Poems.

It soon became evident that he had no sympathy with his self-elected calling. Established for a time in Paris as an assistant to his guardian, he gave himself up to doubtful pleasures, fell into bad company, and in some of his letters went so far as to ridicule the pious forms of expression adopted by the Port Royalists. Moreover, new ideas and aspirations took possession of his mind. In honor of the royal marriage he wrote an ode entitled *La Nymphe de la Seine*, unquestionably possessed of merit though disfigured by many faults. Chapelain was then arbiter of the royal bounties to men of letters, and Vitart sent him the manuscript. "Many of the stanzas," he wrote in reply, "could not be improved. If the few passages I have marked are set right—especially one in which Tritons are placed in a river—the ode will be a fine one." Racine, of course, made all the alterations suggested, and on the recommendation of Chapelain he received one hundred louis d'or from Colbert in the name of the king. This unexpected success disposed him to rely upon literature, but soon afterward, probably to avoid reproaches from Port Royal as to his mode of living and pursuits, he became the guest at Uzès of his mother's brother, Antoine Sconin, the vicar-general in that town, who wished to find him a benefice. Here he wrote his notes on the *Odyssey* and the *Olympiads*—a proof that he did not allow his mind

to be too much exercised upon theological subjects. In less than eighteen months he returned to Paris, and again took to authorship.

Fortune continued to smile on the efforts of the young poet. For writing an ode on the recovery of the grand monarque from an attack of measles, he was awarded a pension of six hundred francs—a sum then sufficient for a bare maintenance. His next effusion was on a more poetical theme, *La Renommée aux Muses*, which Boileau criticised with so much good sense and kindness that the author sought an introduction, and the two men became fast friends. The elder used to boast that he had taught the other how to write verse, which was probably the fact. Be that as it may, Racine soon addressed himself to one of the most trying forms of composition. He wrote for the Bourgogne a tragedy entitled *Amasie*, which was first accepted and then declined. Molière gave him more encouragement, and was rewarded by finding in *La Thébàïde*, a drama prepared at his suggestion, more than one sign of imaginative power, with depth of sensibility and command of language. By this time, still pressed by the Port Royalists, Racine had become prior of Epinay.

### *La Thébàïde and Othon.*

The players of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, who for more than a year had produced but few novelties, were spurred by the success of *La Thébàïde* to fresh exertions. In the previous summer, as a means of adding to the attractiveness of a fête at Fontainebleau, Cor-

neille had produced a play named *Othon*, founded on an intrigue at the court of Otho. He elaborated the picture with the most patient care, writing the third act again and again, and composing for it about twice as many lines as he ultimately adopted. Nor was he without reward. His audience listened to all with the profoundest respect, and innumerable were the compliments bestowed on his work. Interesting enough in a political sense, especially as the problem on which it turned was treated with dignity and eloquence, *Othon* contained little or nothing to attract a mixed audience. Evidently perceiving this, the Troupe Royal showed no haste to put it on the boards, and when finally produced, its career was of the briefest.

#### A Dangerous Theme.

The subject of the next play brought forward at the Palais Royal was suggested by the company to their leader. Hitherto, except in the land of its birth, the legend of Don Juan had been strangely misrepresented, and it was not without some reluctance that Molière entered upon his task. His *Don Juan* would have to be a comedy of the Tartuffe species, and it was by no means easy to arouse anything like serious interest in what had served as materials for still popular burlesques. Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether a more grateful theme could have fallen to his lot.

In the preparation of his groundwork he borrowed freely from Tellez's *El Burlador de Sevilla* and its numerous progeny, adding piquant details of his own in-

vention, and excluding incidents which would be out of place in a philosophical drama. Nearly every scene is irradiated by his distinctive humor, but the tone of the piece, as a whole, is precisely what its nature required. As for the figure of Don Juan, it stands out in the finest colors, in the strongest conceivable relief. Molière was too great a dramatist to content himself with describing such a man through the mouths of other personages. His hero, if hero he may be called, reveals himself with a candor and pointedness which remind us of Iago. His speeches are invariably in the spirit of his actions; he leaves us in no doubt as to the principles by which his conduct is governed; he lays bare the primary anatomy of his soul; he believes nothing, hopes nothing, fears nothing, and insolently proclaims his want of faith in the efficacy of prayer. In a new scene, meeting a mendicant who passes his life in prayer, but who is dying of starvation, he tosses him a louis d'or "for the sake of humanity." Moreover, he is superbly indifferent to all moral considerations; he is unmoved by the anguish of the too-credulous beings whose lives he has wrecked, and is perpetually on the watch for what he terms fresh conquests.

Not the least characteristic of the new scenes in the piece is one in which the libertine appears with a pretty rustic on either arm, alternately assuring each, of course in a tone low enough to escape the ears of the other, that she is the sole mistress of his heart. Nor has remonstrance the slightest effect upon him. In reply to a long and eloquent speech from his father, to the effect that birth is nothing without virtue, that it is

not sufficient for a nobleman to simply bear the title and arms of nobility, he coolly replies: "Sir, if you take a chair you will speak more at your ease." But the climax of his iniquity is not yet reached. He finds it expedient—and here a shaft is aimed against those who had joined in the clamor against Tartuffe—to assume a sanctimonious aspect. "For," he says, "the profession of a hypocrite has marvellous advantages just now. Hypocrisy is a vice in vogue, and all vices in vogue pass for virtues. The imposture is always respected, and even when detected is not to be condemned. Every other human vice is amenable to censure, and may be attacked boldly. Hypocrisy has the privilege of stopping the world's mouth, and enjoys the repose of sovereign impunity. I shall not abandon my pleasures; I simply hide them. I espouse the interests of heaven, and under this convenient pretext shall persecute my enemies, accuse them of impiety and raise up against them those unthinking zealots who, without knowing anything of the merits of the case, will declaim against them in public, heap injuries upon them and condemn them to perdition on their own private authority." The significance of this last sentence, to which Sganarelle listens with mingled horror and consternation, is not to be mistaken. Throughout the play Don Juan is never permitted to enlist our sympathies. His courage, his esprit, his elegant and chivalrous bearing—these and other natural or acquired graces—are attributed to him simply to bring his character within the bounds of humanity, to account for the fascinations he exercises over women, and to deepen, by force of con-



trast, the moral blackness which they appear to relieve. In this portraiture, the most philosophical yet witnessed on the French stage, the genius of Molière probably found its loftiest and most artistic expression.

### *Le Festin de Pierre.*

Under the name of *Le Festin de Pierre*—a title which, meaningless as it was, had acquired too great commercial value from long usage to be discarded by the practical Molière—the play so written was presented at the Palais Royal. Before the curtain rose it must have been evident that the piece would be criticised in a hostile spirit. The audience included a large sprinkling of the class which execrated the author as an enemy of religion. In their belief his object in reintroducing Don Juan on the stage was to exhibit atheism in an alluring light. And, naturally enough, they found what they were predisposed to find. In the self-revealing speeches of Don Juan they saw only a hardy avowal of the unbelief they ascribed to the author. In the graces which the profligate has by right of his birth and education, and which are necessary to explain the success of his vicious enterprises, they saw only an attempt to make him a hero. In the remonstrances and arguments addressed to him by Sganarelle they saw only a desire to bring religion into contempt. In the closing scenes, notwithstanding the beauty of the part of the Statue, especially where, Juan having ordered his valet to precede it with a torch, it says, “No need of light for one whom Heaven guides”—in these

scenes they saw only an unavoidable adherence to the legend.

### Denunciation of Molière.

Briefly, the drift of the play was ingeniously misunderstood, and what might have been intended as a satire against infidelity was taken in precisely the opposite sense. Molière, among other concessions to this stupidity, omitted the scene with the mendicant, which, it would seem, had given particular offense; but nothing short of the suppression of the play altogether would have satisfied his censors. Indeed, the clamor against him increased with each successive representation. Finally, after fifteen performances, *Don Juan* suddenly disappeared from the bills. Not that it had failed to catch the public fancy, for, during its run, the average of the receipts was unusually high. It seems to have been set aside at the instance of the court—a conclusion which is strengthened by the fact that the manuscript was not given to the printers. But, if Louis XIV again yielded to the outcry against his favorite player, he pointedly showed that he did not participate in it. He bestowed upon the Troupe de Monsieur the higher rank of Comédiens du Roi, with a pension of 7,000 francs. He also wished Molière to be titular chief of the company, but to this the dramatist would not assent. "Sire," he said, "I prefer to remain the friend of my comrades." The answer was sufficiently terse, and entirely characteristic of the man. Here we have, in these few words, the main secret of Molière's popularity among the members of the com-

pany; for he was never a self-seeking man, as must be evident to those who have thus far followed his career.

### *L'Amour Médecin.*

The next new play in which the Comédiens du Roi appeared was an original piece, conceived and written by Molière himself. Down to this time, it should be understood, the medical faculty at Paris had seemed to exist for no other purpose than to impoverish and degrade the power of healing. Ignoring discoveries of the highest importance in anatomy and physiology, such as that of the circulation of the blood, the doctors, one and all, took their stand upon the *Aphorisms* of Hippocrates, or rather upon a narrow and unintelligent interpretation of that work, and clung with heroic tenacity to a host of exploded errors. In this they only kept an oath which the Collège had required them to take, namely, to shun anything like an innovation upon the laws laid down by the Father of Medicine. Each of them followed a particular mode of treatment, whatever the nature of the ailment might be. They used drugs without knowing precisely what the effect would be, and were not above the suspicion of taking bribes to kill where they were engaged to cure. In their consultations they invariably expressed themselves in Latin, and on returning to their mother tongue would all but bury their meaning under a mass of pedantic and technical jargon. Arrayed in the quaintest of costumes, with high conical hat, abnormally long peruke and a cloak of antique pattern, they made their way on mules through the tortuous yet pic-

turesque streets of the old quarter of the city, nothing doubting that the singularity of their appearance would inspire the vulgar with awe, while really objects of ridicule to the crowd and of terror to those who stood in need of their assistance.

Invented and prepared at only five days' notice, *L'Amour Médecin* was performed at Versailles in the middle of September, and a week later at the Palais Royal. Nothing could be simpler than the story here worked out. It turns merely on a stratagem employed by an ardent lover in the guise of a doctor to win the heroine from her father. But this little episode served as a foundation for one of the most exquisite and cutting satires Molière had yet contrived. A father, Sganarelle, impersonated by the author, calls in four doctors to cure his daughter of a strange melancholia which oppresses her. Each of these sages was made up to resemble one of the court physicians, and was introduced under a name designed to render the likeness more perfect. The incidents which follow are irresistible. The happy indifference to the fate of their patient with which the doctors proceed to discuss matters in general, instead of her mysterious ailment; the blank refusal of one to believe that a coachman has died in six days from a malady which Hippocrates had said could end in only fourteen to twenty-one; the elaborate ceremony they observe in expressing to Sganarelle an opinion on a point they have not considered, the babel of sound they produce by speaking all at once, the energy with which two of them insist on the application of a particular remedy, each assuring the bewildered father by turns that his daughter

will infallibly die if the treatment prescribed by the other is adopted—all this is treated with matchless skill.

Much of the force of the satire lies in the character of the soubrette, who in her lively manner condoles with the doctors on the wrong done to them when a man runs an antagonist through the body instead of allowing them to prescribe for him, and who declares that a man should be said to die, not of a fever, but of four doctors and two apothecaries. "Man's greatest weakness," says one of the faculty, "is love of life, which we turn to our own profit by our pompous mummery. Let us work in concert in treating our patients, so that, while getting the credit of the cures we effect, we may be able to blame nature for the failures of our art." Altogether, the piece gave rise to a world of merriment, both at court and in town. Everybody, Guy Patin tells us, went to the theatre to "laugh at the court doctors." The indignation of the faculty at this "outrage upon science" was, of course, very marked, but they had at least some comfort in the fact that the dramatist had selected the most prosperous members of the profession as the chief objects of his attack.

#### Alexandre.

When the manager of the Théâtre du Palais Royal received Racine's tragedy, *Alexandre le Grand*, opinion was much divided as to its merits. St. Evremand waxed eloquent in its praise. "No longer," he said, "does the decadence of Corneille fill me with alarm as to the immediate future of tragedy." On the other hand, Corneille himself, to whom the manuscript was

submitted, thought that M. Racine did not unite with his rare gifts as a poet a turn for the drama. In this he was deceived; but it is also true that if Racine had written nothing after *Alexandre* we should be constrained to adopt the same opinion. Notwithstanding the vigor with which the conqueror is occasionally brought before us, the general effect of the play is inferior to that of *La Thébàïde*, and the prominence given to the character of Porus argues an imperfect sense of dramatic proportion. Moreover, the author was still under the influence of the author of *Cinna*, though in some of the scenes we meet with gleams of tenderness all but new to the stage. Finally, however, *Alexandre*, with a few alterations suggested by Boileau, was played at the Palais Royal. Statements to the contrary notwithstanding, the piece met with good success. Molière had some superb scenery painted for it, and the acting was meritorious enough to elicit special praise.

#### Racine's Ingratitude to Molière.

Nevertheless, Racine was not satisfied with what had been done for him. He made no secret of his belief that the tragedy had not created the effect of which it was susceptible. The sycophants who hover about a rising man soon found a means of consoling him. Had *Alexandre* been played by the Troupe, always superior to the Comédiens du Roi in tragedy, the result, they maintained, would have been very different. Racine eagerly caught at the suggestion contained in this remark. He secretly sent a copy of the play to Floridor,



at the same time extracting a promise from Mdlle. Duparc, in whose talents he had a lively faith, that she would transfer her services from her old manager to his rivals. Hastily, but efficiently rehearsed, *Alexandre* was brought out at the Bourgogne on the occasion of its sixth performance at the Palais Royal, and the novel incident of a play being represented in two theatres at the same time naturally gave rise to some remark in Paris. It need hardly be said that the unavoidable comparison between the two troupes was to the disadvantage of Molière's, as the cast at the other playhouse included Floridor, Montfleuri and Mdlle. Desœillets. Molière was, of course, profoundly hurt by what had occurred. He had behaved with the greatest kindness to Racine, receiving him constantly as a guest, lending him much-needed money, keeping *La Thébàide* on the bills at a loss to himself rather than allow it to be supposed that the piece had not had a fairly long run, and producing *Alexandre* with a splendor which the chances of its success by no means justified. In return for these and other favors, the young poet had publicly affronted the troupe, had exposed it to damaging comparisons, and had robbed it of an actress whose place could not easily be supplied. It was in no half-hearted manner that Molière resented the black ingratitude with which he had been treated. He never spoke to Racine again.

#### Agésilas and Antiochus.

Molière had now finished another comedy that was destined to become famous; but the death of Anne of



Austria, in whom he found an excellent friend, induced him to shelve it for a longer period than even etiquette required. Meanwhile, the players of the Bourgogne ventured to try the effect of two novelties—*Agésilas*, by Pierre Corneille, and *Antiochus*, a tragi-comedy, by his brother. Yet another proof of the decadence of the author of the *Cid* was found in the former piece. Even Fontenelle has little to urge in its favor. "It must be admitted" he says, "that *Agésilas* is by M. Corneille, seeing that his name is on the title-page, and that a scene in it between the hero and Lysandre could not easily have been written by any other hand." But, unfortunately for Corneille, now a sexagenarian, one fine scene will no more make an acting play than one swallow will make a summer. The tragedy was quickly withdrawn.

### *Le Misanthrope.*

Molière's new comedy, *Le Misanthrope*, a striking picture of contemporary Parisian life, but pregnant with universal truth, was at length produced, and for many reasons must have taken the audience by surprise. The misanthrope, Alceste, impersonated by the author himself, was a character wholly new to the stage, and, unlike the central figure in other plays from the same pen, is intended to enjoy at least our respect, and even a certain measure of sympathy. He is no vulgar hater of mankind, no churlish or brutal cynic. High and noble in nature, he is alienated from the world by its want of heart, its insincerities, its more or less veiled falsehood, its hypocrisies of complaisance, its thousand

petty foibles. He regards it as nothing less than a crime that men should exchange civilities simply as a matter of form, should breathe a syllable against those whom they call their friends, or should gloss over their opinion of execrable verses when the author asks for it. His practice is at least equal to his theory; contempt for the harmless hypocrisies of every-day life, however, does not prevent him from becoming the slave of a woman in whom they are fully represented, the sprightly, accomplished, heartless coquette Célimène. He is conscious of his folly even as he gives way to it the most, and it is upon the conflict in his case between head and heart, terminating in the predominance of the former, that the interest of the play chiefly depends.

As a critic well observes, "The skill with which Célimène alternately plays with his patience, evades his reproaches, preserves her own independence while lessening his, elicits fresh proofs of his affection while only affording such glimpses of her own as shall serve to keep him from breaking his chains, and eventually making him more angrily in love than ever, is a triumph of delineation such as has rarely, if ever, been equalled." The figure of Alceste gains much by contrast with that of Philinte, the personification of worldly wisdom. The latter genially yields to the habits and customs of society, not because he wholly approves them, but on the principle that it is wise to make the best of circumstances, to take the world very much as one finds it. In this character the moral of the play may be discerned. Molière enforces the necessity of social toleration, though in doing so he casts no ridicule upon

*THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF*

*After an original painting by A. Morlon*

*It is the best trade out ; payment comes whether we kill or cure. No responsibility rests upon us. If a patient dies, it is his own fault, never ours. Lastly, dead men, of all people the most discreet, tell no tales of the doctor.*

THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF,—MOLIERE.





Alceste, whose misanthropy is simply the outcome of virtue in excess. Excellent, also, of their kind are the gentle Eliante, the poetaster Oronte, and the prude Arsinöe. From a strictly dramatic point of view *Le Misanthrope* is not without defects, but it occupies a place by the side of *Don Juan* and *Tartuffe* in right of its beauty of style, its felicitous delineations, and its refined pungency as a satire against more than one fashionable false pretence. Its purely literary merit was so high that Boileau hailed it as his friend's masterpiece; but Molière was not of the same opinion.

### *Le Médecin Malgré Lui.*

*The Misanthrope* did not need the aid of a good after-piece, but when the great comedy was played for the twelfth time, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* was added to the bill. In this piece, which is erroneously supposed to have gained a hearing for its predecessor, Molière utilized fragments of his *Fagotier* and *Médecin Volant*, thus provoking a general laugh at the expense of the medical fraternity. Martine, the wife of an intelligent woodcutter, Sganarelle—personated by Molière—meets two men in search of a doctor for Lucinde, who, in order to get rid of a lover favored by her father, the stupid Geronte, but not by herself, has feigned dumbness. In revenge for a little corporal chastisement to which she has been subjected by her husband, Martine at once recommends him to their notice. He is, she says, a skilful doctor, but will not reveal the nature of his calling unless endgelled into doing so. Her hint is acted upon;



and Sganarelle, informed of the reason of the assault made upon him, avows himself what they suppose him to be. He is then carried off in triumph to Geronte's house. It must be admitted that he plays his part very well. He takes kindly to the conical hat and long gown peculiar to the faculty. He rakes up a large variety of medical phrases. He adorns his discourse with a sufficient quantity of incoherent Latin to impress those about him with a conviction that he is a very learned man. Nay, it is a question with him whether he shall not remain a doctor all his life. "It is the best trade out," he tells us; "payment comes whether we kill or cure. No responsibility rests upon us; we may hack about as we please the stuff given us to work upon. If a patient dies, it is his own fault, never ours. Lastly, dead men, of all people the most discreet, tell no tales of the doctor who has sent them to their long account." His self-possession, too, seldom deserts him. Geronte having gently reminded him that, contrary to what he had said, the heart was on the left and the liver on the right side of the body, "Yes," is the reply, "that was so formerly; but nous avons changé tout cela"—this being the original of that popular phrase—"and we now adopt an entirely new method."

#### Attila.

Soon after Molière returned to Paris, the great Corneille, estranged for some unknown reason from the Hôtel de Bourgogne, brought him an *Attila*, which he bought for two thousand livres, and produced at the Palais Royal. However weak the tragedy may be in

other respects, the portraiture of the king of the Huns is not without breadth and force, and the character appears to have been impersonated with remarkable spirit. It was fairly successful and became one of the stock plays of the company, though Molière himself, as became a manager, was not blind to its numerous faults in versification. "Corneille," he said, "has a familiar who from time to time puts noble lines into his head, but immediately afterward leaves him to work by himself; he then fares very badly, and the aforesaid familiar waxes merry."

A severe illness proved grave enough to keep Molière off the stage for several months. Never very strong, he was now in a rapid consumption, and it was only by restricting himself to a milk diet that he could hope to retard the progress of the disease. The doctors could do little or nothing for him—a fact which, compared with their extravagant pretensions, may well have prompted him to follow up the attack begun in *L'Amour Médecin*. Nevertheless, he seems to have received visits from at least one member of the faculty, M. de Marvilian, for whom he conceived a high esteem, and for whose son he procured from the king a canonry in the Chapel Royal at Vincennes. "But how comes it that you have a doctor?" exclaimed Louis XIV. "How do you get on together?" "Sire," replied the dramatist, "we agree well enough, though only to differ. He writes prescriptions for me. I take no heed of them, and my health improves." Having regained strength as the summer approached, he now set his mind on the production of *Tartuffe*, and notwithstanding strenuous

opposition, it was produced a few weeks later under the title of *L'Imposteur*, this concession being required by the king, before withdrawing his prohibition. It was also required that the hypocrite should appear, not in sombre and semi-clerical costume, as before, but as a well-dressed man of the world.

### *L'Imposteur.*

Never had a new piece brought together so large and excited an audience as was gathered in the Palais Royal on the opening night of *L'Imposteur*. Every nook and corner of the house was occupied, and each spectator seemed to have a personal interest in the result. The first two acts, which do little more than prepare us for the character of the impostor, were listened to with impatience, although strengthened by good acting. Then, dressed as the king had suggested, in the superbly laced coat and other bravery affected by the exquisites, Tartuffe, now called Panulphe, came on in the person of Ducroisy, who realized the author's intention with a thoroughness possible only to a fine artist. His costume was not in keeping with the character, but any sense of this inconsistency was merged in admiration of the depth and force of the conception, the dramatic power displayed in the delineation of the hypocrite, and the withering yet dignified satire which pervaded the whole. It was to no purpose that the hypocrites sought to raise a hostile demonstration against the piece. Every sign of hostility was promptly drowned in applause, and in the enthusiasm manifested on the fall of the curtain

Molière saw substantial compensation for the annoyance he had suffered in connection with what he regarded as his masterpiece.

### *Andromaque.*

No ordinary surprise awaited the audience assembled at the Bourgogne when Racine's *Andromaque* made its appearance. In addition to being a tragedy of the order so long desired in vain, it was to them what the *Cid* had been to their progenitors in the days of Richelieu, the sudden revelation of a genius previously unsuspected. In framing his plot, Racine deviated very widely from the legend of the captivity of Hector's widow and son at the palace of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus. Three distinct and conflicting interests are brought into play. Andromache is loved by Pyrrhus, Pyrrhus by Hermione, and Hermione by Orestes. It is only by becoming the wife of her tyrant that Andromache can save her son from being delivered up to the vindictive Greeks; a deep-seated reverence for the memory of Hector struggles with the impulses of maternal affection, and at length, with a determination not to survive the marriage ceremony, she consents to the sacrifice required at her hands. Betrothed to Pyrrhus, whom she has left Greece to wed, Hermione, stung to madness by her humiliation, causes him to be assassinated on the altar steps just after the safety of Astyanax is assured, the chosen instrument of her vengeance being Orestes. But a fierce revulsion of feeling sweeps through her mind as the latter tells her of the crime she has urged

him to perpetrate. Far from giving him the expected reward of his devotion, she assails him with bitter invective, falls into an agony of remorse and destroys herself on the bier of her victim. Stunned by the discovery that he has lost his honor to no purpose, Orestes is hurried by Pylades and other friends beyond reach of the punishment with which he is threatened. In elaborating this impressive story, so different from the one related in the Greek play, Racine manifested the power required to do it justice. Blemishes in the work there unquestionably were; yet, viewed as a whole, it left no doubt that, in the field opened to him by Quinault and Molière, he would reign supreme unless another Euripides should arise.

In the third act Andromache pleads with Hermione for the life of her son; but Hermione answers her scornfully:

I understand your grief; but my father has spoken, and it is my stern duty to be silent. It is he who moves Pyrrhus to anger; but who can plead with Pyrrhus like yourself? Your eyes have long swayed him. Gain him to your side, and I will lend my voice.

As Hermione sweeps away, Pyrrhus and his counsellor Phoenix enter, and the unhappy mother hears the counsellor say:

*Phoenix*.—Let us give up Hector's son to the Greeks.

*Andromache*.—(Throwing herself at Pyrrhus' feet.) Ah, prince, pause! What will you do? If you give up the boy, give them his mother also. You who have sworn so much

love for me, O Heaven, can I not touch your pity? Am I condemned without hope?

*Pyrrhus*.—Phoenix will tell you; my word is pledged.

*Andr.*—You who would have braved for me so many perils!

*Pyrr.*—I was blind once; my eyes are opened now. I might then have granted you grace, but you did not even ask it. 'Tis now too late.

*Andr.*—Ah, prince! you heard the sighs which feared refusal. Forgive to fallen greatness this remnant of a pride that fears to show itself importunate. You know my wishes; and but for you Andromache would never have clasped the knees of a master. . . . See, then, the condition to which I am fallen. I have seen my father dead, and our walls thrown down; I have seen all my kindred perish. I have seen my husband dragged through the dust; his son reserved with me for chains. But what cannot a son do? I breathed, I hoped. I believed that our prison might become a refuge. Pardon, dear Hector, my credulity. I could not suspect thy enemy of a crime. In spite of himself, I thought him magnanimous.

Pyrrhus feels his heart melting, and sends away Phoenix so that he may speak more freely; and he conjures Andromache to think well of what she is about to do. She may, if she will, still save her son, but this is the last opportunity that will be given to her. As he goes on, his appeal to her becomes impassioned. "For the last time, save him, save yourself," he cries. "I know what oaths I must break for you, . . . but this offer is not to be disdained. You must reign or you must perish. I die if I lose you, but I die if I wait. Think of it." Thus Pyrrhus leaves her to make her choice.

The unhappy Andromache remains on the stage with Cephisa, her waiting-woman. Cephisa counsels her to accept Pyrrhus' offer, but she cannot resolve to marry her tyrant.



*Andr.*—Can I forget Hector unburied, dragged in dishonor round our walls? Can I forget his father thrown down at my feet, covering the altar with blood? Think, think, Cephisa, of that cruel night. Imagine Pyrrhus with fierce eyes entering by the light of the burning palace, making his way over my dead brethren!

*Cephisa.*—Enough. Let us then see your son die. All they want is that you— You tremble, lady!

*Andr.*—Ah, with what memories you overwhelm my soul! What, Cephisa! must I see the death of my son, of my only joy, the image of Hector? Alas, I remember well the day when his brave heart led him forth to seek Achilles or death! He asked for his son and took him in his arms. "Dear wife," he said, drying my tears, "I know not what fate is reserved for me; I leave thee my son as a pledge of my love; if he loves me, let him find me in thee."

The fourth act opens with Andromache. She has made her choice. She will marry Pyrrhus, and thus engage him to protect her boy; and when she has left him at the altar, she will destroy herself. She takes Cephisa into her confidence, and instructs her how to teach her infant after she is gone.

*Andr.*—Make my son know the heroes of his race. As much as you may, lead him in their steps. Tell him by what great deeds they have been distinguished, what they did rather than what they were. Speak to him daily of the virtues of his father, and sometimes also tell him of his mother. But let him not think, Cephisa, of avenging us. We leave him a master whom he must consider. Let him have of his ancestors a sober recollection. He is of the blood of Hector, he is all that remains of him; and for that remnant I myself in one day have sacrificed blood and life, my hatred and my love.

Our attention is now recalled to Hermione, who receives with a terrible calm of passion which her attendant



cannot understand, the news of this renewed alteration in Pyrrhus. She will say nothing to Cleone, but sends for Orestes, whom she interrupts in his eager delight at the summons.

*Herm.*—Prince, I would know if you love me?

*Orestes.*—If I love you? O Heaven! My oaths, my perjuries, my flight, my return to you, my respect, my reproaches, my despair, my eyes drowned in tears—what witnesses will you believe if you believe not these?

*Herm.*—Avenge me; I believe everything.

*Orest.*—Be it so. Let us see once more Greece on flame. Let us take, you the place of Helen, I of Agamemnon, making famous my arm and your name. Awake once more in the land the miseries of Troy, and let us be famed like our fathers. Let us go. I am ready.

*Herm.*—No, prince, remain. I would not carry such insults so far. What! to crown the insolence of my enemies, shall I await elsewhere a tardy revenge? shall I trust to the fate of battles which perhaps in the end may not avenge me? I will have all Epirus weep my departure. But if you avenge me, it must be in an hour. Your delays are to me as refusals. Hasten to the temple. There you must sacrifice——

*Orest.*—Whom?

*Herm.*—Pyrrhus.

*Orest.*—Pyrrhus, lady!

*Herm.*—Ah! your hate wavers. Fly, and fear not that I will call you back.

Orestes is glad of an opportunity to avenge himself on Pyrrhus, but would prefer to take his vengeance openly. "Let us be his enemies, not his assassins," he says. He fears to sully his own name and the fair name of Greece by assassinating the king of Epirus. But Hermione is very imperative that Pyrrhus should die at once. She

feels that though he has cruelly wronged her, her old passion for him may return unless he is quickly punished. Unless he dies to-day she may forgive him, and love him again to-morrow. Orestes consents at last with reluctance and dread of the revolution that must follow, but still asks for delay. He will do it at night, not now. But Hermione is not to be put off.

*Herm.*—To-day he weds Andromache. Already in the temple the throne is raised, and my shame complete. Come back covered with the blood of the traitor. Go! and thus make sure of my heart.

*Orest.*—But, lady, think——

*Herm.*—Oh, it is too much, prince! Go vaunt your constancy to other ears than mine, and leave me to my revenge. I will go alone into the temple when the marriage rites are prepared, and where you dare not go to win me. There I shall find means to approach my enemy. I will pierce the heart which I could not touch; and my bloody hands, turned on myself, will unite us in spite of him. Thankless as he is, it will be sweeter to die with him than live with you.

*Orest.*—No; I will take this fatal pleasure from you, lady. He shall die only by the hand of Orestes. Your enemies shall be sacrificed by me, and you shall then reward my care, if it so pleases you.

*Herm.*—Go! leave to me the guidance of your fate, and let your ships be ready for our flight.

In the last act Orestes announces the death of Pyrrhus, but not by his hand:

*Orest.*—Lady, it is done! You are obeyed. Pyrrhus at the altar-steps has breathed forth his false life.

*Herm.*—He is dead!

Orestes then tells her the story. He went into the temple, and there saw Pyrrhus standing at the altar with

Andromache at his side. Pyrrhus recognized him, but only to show greater boldness. The presence of the Greeks, whose ambassador he had defied, made his marriage more splendid. He took his diadem and placed it on the head of Andromache. "I give you," he said, "my faith and my crown. Andromache, reign over Epirus and me. I swear to your son a father's care. I call the gods to witness it, I swear it to his mother. His enemies shall be my enemies, and I acknowledge him as king of the Trojans." To these words the Greeks answered only with a cry of rage. They flung themselves upon Pyrrhus. Orestes saw him fall, and hurried forth to save the princess and convey her to the ships.

Woman-like, Hermione's hate for Pyrrhus now turns to wrath and scorn for Orestes.

*Herm.*—What have they done?

*Orest.*—Pardon their impatience. They have, I know, forestalled your revenge. You would that my hand had struck the first blow, that he should have known that he died for your cause. But it was my zeal that was their example; for you I led them to the temple. Yours is the honor of a deed which their arms have only executed. You alone inspired the blow—

*Herm.*—Silence, traitor! This vile deed is thine alone. Go vaunt your fury among the Greeks. Go! I disown it and you. Savage! what have you done? with what fury have you cut the thread of a beautiful life? Speak! Who made thee the arbiter of his fate? Why have you killed him?—by what right? What has he done to thee?

*Orest.*—Gods above! What? Have not you yourself—you, here, a moment since, ordained his death?

Hermione replies to Orestes' exclamation:

*Herm.*—Ah, who would believe an outraged lover? You should have read my spirit better. Saw you not through all my rage that my heart gave the lie to my lips? Even if I said it, should you have consented? You should have made me repeat it a hundred times. You should have returned to consult me before giving the blow. You should have left to myself the care of my revenge. Adieu! you may depart. I remain in Epirus. I give up Greece, Sparta, my country, my family. It is enough for me, traitor, that they have produced a monster like you.

Orestes is left bewildered and overwhelmed by these invectives. He has made himself an assassin, a regicide, a sacrilegious murderer, to please her; and now she turns upon him. But he has little time to bewail himself; for Pylades and his retainers rush in to force him to flee.

Andromache is queen; the people are ready to obey her, and she has vowed revenge upon the foes of Pyrrhus. But Orestes, true to his love, will not forsake Hermione, until he is told that she is dead. On her way to the temple she met the bier of Pyrrhus, and, bidding the bearers halt, stooped over the body, then turned her head toward heaven and stabbed herself.

The play ends with a wild outburst of passion and despair from Orestes. He is the sport of the gods. In his anguish the day seems to darken round him, and he sees a vision of his rival and his love:

*Orest.*—What? Pyrrhus! I meet thee once again! Pierced by so many blows, how hast thou escaped? Hold! here is my blow, which I have saved for thee. But what do I see? Hermione before my eyes clasps him in her arms. She snatches him from the threatened blow. Ye gods, what looks she casts upon me! What demons, what serpents she brings after her!

## VI.

### Golden Age of French Drama.

The period now under consideration has justly been termed the golden age of the French drama, for now appeared on the stage simultaneously the choicest works of the three greatest masters of dramatic art. Pierre Corneille, in his *Cid*, *Horace*, *Polyeucte* and *Cinna*, had given to France a national tragedy such as no other people possessed. Molière had done even more in comedy, for in this he was the most versatile genius the world has ever known. The tragic art of Racine supplemented rather than surpassed that of his great contemporary. His works reflect the serene and settled formality of an age when the sun of monarchy shone with an effulgence in which the life of the entire nation was centred. Then there are Thomas Corneille, Quinault, and others who would themselves have been classed in the very first rank had they not been overshadowed by the great classic triad.

The form of French tragedy thus established, like all else belonging to the age of the grand monarch, proclaimed itself as the settled model of the time, and as such was accepted by a submissive world. Proud of

its self-imposed fetters, tragedy denied the liberty of which it had deprived itself to the art of which it claimed to furnish the highest examples. But while calling itself classical it had not caught the essential spirit of the Greeks. The elevation of tone which marks the serious drama in the age of Louis XIV was a real elevation, but it does not lose itself in a sphere peopled by the myths of a national religion. Its themes and personages are entirely conventional, and its speeches and passions are cadenced by a modern measure. Orestes and Iphigenia do not bring with them the cries of the Erinnyes or the flame on the altar of Artemis; nor is there anything of the awe-inspiring grandeur with which Æschylus and Sophocles invest their heroes. In construction, the simplicity and regularity of the ancient models are stereotyped into a rigid etiquette by the exigencies of the court theatre, which is but an apartment of the palace; and the unities of time and place, with the Greeks mere rules of convenience, French tragedy imposes upon itself as a permanent yoke.

In 1668, Molière contrived a counterpoise to the exceptional popularity of of Racine's *Andromaque*. This was a free rendering of the *Amphitruo* of Plautus, which in more than one respect was greatly to his credit. He wrote it with a delicacy to which the nature of the subject was hardly favorable. Even Schlegel is constrained to confess that the coarseness of the old legend is refined as much as it possibly could be without injury to its spirit and boldness. In both incident and character, too, the French *Amphitryon* is superior to the

Latin original. While Jupiter is appearing to Alcmène in the form of Amphitryon, her husband, Mercure, pays court to Cléanthis, the wife of Sosie, Amphitryon's serving-man. Between Alcmène and Cléanthis a most dramatic contrast is displayed, the former being a pattern of tenderness and the latter so inveterate a scold, "though all in affection," that Mercure is induced to keep out of her way as much as possible. If Armande looked and spoke like Alcmène, whose part she took, it must have been a remarkable triumph of art over nature; but Sosie, with his fine humor and quaint philosophy, was one of the best of Molière's characters, and was doubtless represented to perfection. Boileau declared that he liked the ancient *Amphitryon* better than the other—an opinion which other critics, after a close comparison of the two plays, have not endorsed.

### L'Avare.

In his next work, *L'Avare*, a five-act comedy in prose, we have the most typical product of Molière's many-sided genius. In each of his other plays he had given special prominence to one of his qualities as a dramatist; here they are all laid under contribution in about equal degrees. Much of the power revealed in *Don Juan* is displayed side by side with the finest humor, the tenderest sentiment, the most exquisite ridicule, the most searching satire. Indebted to the *Aulularia* for the general conception of the piece, Molière deviated from it in several important respects, and in the result left the comedy of Plautus far behind. Harpagon is preferable to



Euclio, not only as being free from anything like extravagance, but in depth and force of characterization. He is generally regarded as the most vivid embodiment yet in existence of the sordid passion which absorbs his mind. Many of his actions and sayings have passed into proverbs. He is the bourgeois miser who steals the oats from his horses; who is distracted by the suspicion that his children intend to rob him; who, from a constitutional objection to the word "give," will only say "I lend you" good day; who will sacrifice his daughter to a stupid old man rather than give her a modest dowry; who, on finding it necessary to entertain ten persons at supper, provides for eight only; who counsels his gambling son to lend out at good interest the money he wins; whose love for a young woman yields in the end to avarice; and who, unlike Euclio, is anxious to increase as well as hoard what he possesses. Every scene in which he appears serves to throw fresh light upon his character. Yet, repulsive as is the vice he represents, his presence throws no gloom over the play, partly because he is held up to derision as well as hatred, and partly because all his surroundings are treated in the spirit of the liveliest comedy.

For the groundwork of the piece, which also differs from that of the *Aulularia*, we have a double love intrigue, the personages being numerous enough to bring on the stage the entire company of the Palais Royal. Many incidents and scraps of dialogue are borrowed from Plautus and from modern Italian farces. Molière himself played Harpagon, though the increasing weakness of his chest; now shown in a chronic, hacking cough,

rendered him unable, at least without a dangerous effort, to portray the anguish of the miser on discovering the loss of his treasure. Béjart, who was cast for La Flèche, the valet, was also laboring under an infirmity conspicuous enough to become a part of the play. Not long before, in the Place Royal, he had surprised two of his friends doing their best to run each other through the body. He impulsively rushed between them, and was so badly wounded in the foot as to make him lame for the rest of his life.

### Prince Condé.

In nowise discouraged by the comparative failure of *L'Avare*, Molière continued to exert himself in behalf of his beloved *Tartuffe*. Even if that immortal comedy should attract only seekers of curiosity—and he now had some reason to fear as much—its production would be of great advantage to the troupe, and of still greater advantage to himself. Louis XIV had not yet re-examined the manuscript, as he had promised, and Molière, too prudent to trouble him with another letter respecting it, decided to recall the matter to his mind by causing the play to be privately represented before an august assemblage. It should be understood that for some time past he had a close friend in the great Condé, whose eagle-like face, still unseamed by years, was often to be seen at the hospitable table in the Rue Richelieu or at Auteuil. “Molière,” he said one day, “I am sure that my visits interfere with your work. I shall not come to see you again unless you expressly invite me.

But I hope that you will come to see me whenever your leisure permits it. You have only to send in your name by a valet-de-chambre; your visits can never be ill-timed." Nor did this prove an empty compliment. The prince invariably received the dramatist as one of his most honored guests. "Molière," he used to say, "is a man of genius, of solid judgment, of wide erudition. I never tire of his society."

In the middle of September, before *L'Avare* had completed its first short run, the Comédiens du Roi set forth for the ancient and picturesque château of Chantilly, which now belonged to the prince, and there played *Tartuffe* before an audience comprising many personages of a rank exalted enough to give special interest to the performance. Molière, it is probable, had induced his host to bring them together, so as to remind the king of his promise, and he gained his point; for his majesty soon afterward turned his attention to the piece.

### *Les Plaideurs.*

When Molière returned to Paris he found some of his laurels menaced. Racine, not content with being regarded as the rival of Corneille, suddenly made an excursion into the domain of light satirical comedy by writing *Les Plaideurs*, a clever adaptation of the *Wasps* of Aristophanes. Early in the year Racine had been dispossessed by legal process of his benefice at Epinay for refusing to take the clerical habit, and was looking about him for some other source of income. Brought into contact with advocates who often exposed them-

selves to ridicule by their pedantry and prolixity, he resolved to exercise his wit at the expense of law-practice in general.

Farcical in incident but deficient in humor, *Les Plaideurs* may yet be allowed to take rank as an excellent comedy, thanks to wit, refined sarcasm, clever sketches of character, and a by no means inconsiderable amount of the Attic salt of the original. In it we find personages soon to become proverbial—the judge who is so enraptured with his calling that he sleeps in his robe and cap, the advocate who opens his address with the creation of the world, and the countess who seems to have her being only in the stifling atmosphere of the law courts. Most of the piece was written in a tavern, where the wits of Paris, including Boileau, Lafontaine, Chapelle and Furetière, frequently met to kill time. The scene between Chicaneau and the countess was derived from an incident which occurred in the house of Boileau's elder brother, the enthusiastic litigant of real life being the comtesse de Crisse, recently made notorious by the fact that the Parlement, in sheer self-defense, had rendered her unable to commence any action without a certificate from two of its own counsellors.

### **Tartuffe in Public.**

The hour to which Molière had so long looked forward was at hand. Early in 1669, to the consternation and dismay of his devout subjects as a body, the king set aside the decree against the representation of *Tartuffe*, and, as though to mark his sense of the bitter

attacks made upon the dramatist, permitted the hypocrite to appear in his original name and garb. The announcement on the bills acted upon Paris like an electric shock; on the day selected for the reproduction the approaches to the theatre were densely crowded, and a few minutes after the opening of the doors every corner of the house was occupied. If Molière had any doubts as to the success of *Tartuffe* as a work of dramatic art they were speedily set at rest. By a large majority of the audience the comedy was listened to with mingled admiration and resentment—admiration of the genius displayed in the conception and elaboration of the picture, resentment at the calumnies to which the author had been exposed. Except in a few unimportant details, the play had undergone no alteration since its previous performance, and was obviously calculated to promote rather than injuriously affect the interests of religion.

One of the most amusing scenes is founded on an incident which occurred during the campaign of 1662, when Louis XIV invited Péréfixe, the bishop of Rhodéz, to join him at supper. The prelate declined, for it was a fast day, "and he must make but a light repast." As soon as he had gone, a courtier described to the king the nature of this light repast, which consisted of several exquisite dishes. "Le pauvre homme," the king frequently exclaimed, as the items were named, varying the tone of his voice at each utterance. Molière availed himself of this to illustrate the blind infatuation of Orgon for the hypocrite. Returning after two days' absence, the bourgeois asks whether all has gone

well during that time. Dorine says that her mistress has been feverish. "And Tartuffe?" "He supped by himself in her presence, very devoutly eating two partridges and half a leg of mutton hashed." "Poor soul!" Dorine goes on to say that her mistress had consented to be bled. "And Tartuffe?" "He took courage like a man; and, fortifying his soul against all evils, to make up for the blood which madame had lost, he drank at déjeuner four good beakers of wine." "Poor soul!" the old dupe again murmurs. Excellently managed, this diverting episode appears like a ray of light upon the surface of the gloomy yet fascinating play. The dénouement is somewhat forced and unnatural, but it provided the grateful poet with the means of paying an honorable tribute to the king, who in the last act uses his absolute power to crush the hypocrite in the hour of his triumph.

It was not a mere gratification of curiosity that *Tartuffe* achieved. No such tumult of applause as that which broke forth on the fall of the curtain had yet been heard on the French stage. In this demonstration, together with the congratulations showered upon him by friends behind the scenes, Molière was rewarded for the trouble and annoyance he had suffered on account of what he deemed his masterpiece; but he seems to have thought the advantage had been gained at too high a price. "Tartuffe," he was told, "is really of service to virtue." "That is true," he replied, "but experience has taught me that it is a dangerous thing to espouse her interests, and at times I reproach myself for having done so." The play was repeated for forty-four nights



in succession—at that time an almost unprecedented run—and the company, finding its exchequer full, insisted, with one voice, that the sum due to Molière as the author should be doubled whenever the piece was played.

### Britannicus.

The attention of the theatre-going public was now turned to the Bourgogne, where, in the middle of December, another tragedy by Racine, named *Britannicus*, was brought out before a deeply-interested audience, the great Corneille occupying one of the boxes. Friends and foes were alike anxious to see how far the young dramatist would justify the reputation he had so suddenly achieved. Foreseeing that much would be expected of him, Racine had taken more than usual pains with his work, and the result seemed likely to realize all his hopes. Based upon Tacitus, but often original in character and incident, *Britannicus* formed a splendid representation of Nero and his court, though it may not be strictly true, as was said, that “all the energy of the Roman annalist is here expressed in verse worthy of Virgil.” Nero himself is portrayed with a vigor which the author often missed in his treatment of male personages, and anything more winsome and pathetic than Mdlle. d’Ennebaut as Junie it would not be easy to conceive. Every other important character in the play, too, is finely drawn and contrasted. No lack of sensibility or dramatic skill was betrayed, and the diction was by far the most refined yet heard in a French tragedy.



## VII.

### The Last Days of Molière.

Molière, whose malady continued to make rapid progress, had now arrived at an important stage in his career. He saw little or no encouragement to pursue the new path into which he had struck six years previously. *Don Juan* had no sooner appeared than it was rigorously suppressed, and *Tartuffe* had very nearly shared the same fate. Moreover, each of these comedies had exposed him to the most virulent abuse, though any pain he may have suffered on this account was lessened by a conviction that a later age would do justice to his motives in composing them. Experience had taught him that between a sportive satire on folly and an elaborate onslaught on deeply-rooted vice there was an important difference. The former had the countenance of the king; the latter aroused so much ire that his majesty was compelled to stop its publication. Under these circumstances, it would seem, Molière, however tempted he may have been always to display his powers at their best, seems to have asked himself whether, for the sake of the little commonwealth of players at the Palais Royal, whose sole dependence was in him, he ought not to discontinue the composition of

pieces which his royal master might be prevailed upon to prohibit as soon as they appeared. Had he not done enough already to secure an enviable place among the writers of the Golden age? He had still many chances of exercising his wit, his humor, his genial yet searching satire. The doctors were still ambling on their mules through the streets of Paris in all the pride of solemn quackery; every wealthy plebeian was aping the tone and bearing of his betters; the fine ladies of Paris, who had incited the religious world to regard him as a wretch deserving the stake, had redelivered themselves into the hands of the satirist by substituting for *préciosité* an affected predilection for all kinds of learning. Whatever his reasons may have been, Molière henceforward confined himself to his lighter vein, and the fascinating voice which had spoken to the world in *Don Juan* and *Tartuffe* was no more to be heard.

### *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.*

In his next work, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, the dramatist once more ridicules the craving among the wealthy bourgeoisie to gain admission into fashionable society. Monsieur Jourdain, a retired draper, resolves to make up for the deficiencies of his education, if he can be said to have received any, and to pose as a man of quality. He surrounds himself with professors of dancing, music, fencing and philosophy. He arrays himself in clothes of the most resplendent hues. He is delighted to hear that his father, far from having been a draper by trade, as the vulgar supposed, was really a

gentleman who chanced to have a good knowledge of woolen stuffs and broadcloths, and who, being of an obliging disposition, chose such articles in the country, had them brought to Paris, and gave them to his friends for money. Moreover, when Cléonte, an excellent youth, aspires to the hand of M. Jourdain's daughter Lucile, her father rejects him on the ground that he is not of noble birth. But the bourgeois gentilhomme is not a person to be angry with. He is an incarnation of the parvenu spirit in its most genial aspect; he has an honest belief in the virtues of rank and education; he is always in good humor, always satisfied with himself, always of childlike simplicity. Neither the sharp remonstrances of his wife, a truly sensible woman, nor the railery of Nicole, the waiting-maid, has any effect upon the beaming complacency with which he struts about in his finery, makes progress in courtly accomplishments, and learns that what he has been talking all his life is prose.

His credulity is the pivot upon which the plot chiefly turns. Disguised as a son of the Grand Seigneur, Cléonte appears before the delighted bourgeois, avows a passion for his daughter, and, after investing him in due form with the dignity of mamamouchi, gains his consent to the marriage. Neatly dovetailed into the story is the figure of an impecunious and rascally nobleman, Dorante, who enriches himself at the expense of M. Jourdain by promising to advance his interests at court. The circumstances surrounding the investiture, although not without a counterpart in real life, must be deemed a little too farcical, but have not prevented *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* from taking rank as a masterpiece of com-

edy—a distinction it enjoys by reason of its dialogue, its characters, its unfailing gayety and humor.

*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was played first at Chambord and then at the Palais Royal. Before the court, it should be noted, each act was accompanied by a ballet, the most important being that in which the Turks accompanying Cléonte to M. Jourdain's house took part, and in which Lulli, the composer of all the music, appeared under the name of Chiacaron as the Grand Mufti. Molière's independence was brought to a severe test on this occasion. The king never relaxed a muscle during the whole of the performance, and on meeting the dramatist at supper-time did not utter a word of congratulation. The courtiers, however disposed they may have been to enjoy the ridicule heaped upon citizen pretenders to quality, promptly affected to look down upon the piece and its author, especially as they had not forgotten their old grudge against him. Many were of opinion that his genius was on the wane; others declared that he had committed an unpardonable offense in exhibiting a count as a chevalier d'industrie.

But a peculiar surprise was in store for these courtly censors. It came upon them after a second performance of the play. "M. Molière," the king then said to the author, "my reason for not speaking to you the other day of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was that I feared I had been blinded by the completeness of the acting to any faults it might have. I now see that it is excellent; nothing you have written has diverted me more. Henceforward, too, Mdlle. Beauval, hitherto on trial, will be a member of your company." In an instant the attitude

of the courtiers underwent a change. Many were of opinion that his genius improved with age; others began to admire the adroitness of Dorante as a chevalier d'industrie. The dramatist kept to his room to escape a chorus of congratulations from men whom he heartily despised. The story is doubtless true; for the servility of the courtiers in the age of Louis XIV is almost incredible, while the monarch delighted in quietly ridiculing the homage he demanded. For the rest, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was received with acclamations at the Palais Royal, not only on account of its intrinsic value, but because, as Grimarest puts it, each wealthy citizen saw in the chief personage a vivid portrait of another.

Molière's *Psyche* and *Les Fourberies de Scapin* need not here be described in detail. The former was written by order of Louis XIV to illustrate the legend of Psyche in the form of a ballet. It was more remarkable for its mounting than for its literary excellence, though Molière had the coöperation of Quinault and Corneille.

*Psyche* was to be connected with an incident of deep personal interest to Molière. Nearly five years had elapsed since Mdle. Debré went to Auteuil, and it was hoped that, under her influence, Molière had burnt the idol he had so long adored. But this he had not done. His passion for the coquette who bore his name was proof against even the remembrance of the dishonor she had brought upon him. Her ascendancy over him seems to have increased each time that he met her in his house at the Rue de Richelieu, at rehearsal or on the stage. It is probable that he never appeared with her in scenes more or less analogous to their own situation—and there

were many such scenes in his plays—without an intensity of feeling which, if it made his voice husky, must have added to the force of his acting. Had his wisdom been equal to his generosity, he would have sent her away; as it was, moth-like, he continued to hover about the flame. In *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, not content with limning her portrait with the lightest and tenderest hand in the character of Lucile, he identified himself to some extent with her lover, who, though persuaded that she has betrayed him, is unable to shake off his chains—nay, discovers new charms in her acknowledged defects of mind and person. But it was not until *Psyche* appeared that the poet ceased to be master of himself. By the time the curtain fell, he was as fervently in love with Armande as when he led her away from the altar of a little Parisian church, or when, the scales having dropped from his eyes, he unbosomed himself to Chappelle in the garden at Auteuil. In anguish hardly to be described, yet unselfishly remembering that mental disquietude would hasten his end, Mdlle. Debrie earnestly urged his wife, if only for the sake of her own interests, to seek a reconciliation with and respect him. Armande went to him in a penitential attitude; and Molière, in the excess of his new-found happiness, had no heart to speak or think of the past.

#### *Les Fourberies de Scapin.*

In anticipation of the production of *Psyche* at the Palais Royal, Molière, now in the highest spirits, threw off *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. His need of a novelty at

this time must have been very pressing, for in none of his plays did he rely so little on his own powers of invention as in this. The plot, which turns on the devices employed by an astute valet to wring money from a close-fisted father for a prodigal son, was suggested by the *Phormio* of Terence, and was developed with the aid of details borrowed from Rotrou's *Sœur*, Tabarin's farce of *Francisque*, and other pieces. Certain it is that he improved upon what he did borrow, besides animating the action and the dialogue with a verve quite his own.

### *Les Femmes Savantes.*

Molière next made an assault upon a craze which may be described as a survival in a new form of the affectation he had laughed away in *Les Précieuses*. Nearly every lady of fashion now deemed it necessary to be learned in philosophy, metaphysics, mathematics, Greek and the niceties of French grammar. The stars of de Scudéri and Calprenède paled before those of Plato, Descartes, Nicole and Vaugelas. If poetry and romance continued to be read, it was simply as a relief from the strain of sublime and far-reaching speculation. In a word, Parisian society found itself overrun with blue-stockings of the most formidable kind, and it became a question whether the scientific jargon in vogue was not worse than the inflated rhetoric of former years. In this folly, the fashionable set at the Hôtel de Rambouillet were encouraged by several of the men who hovered about them, and to one especially attention is now directed. The abbé Cotin,



in his own belief, was a very remarkable man. He seriously regarded himself as the father of French enigma, as the first of sonnet-writers, and as a more powerful preacher than Bossuet. In one of Boileau's earlier satires a painful immortality was conferred upon him, and in his consequent exasperation he wrote a pamphlet against his critic, at the same time heaping gratuitous insults upon Molière. By doing so, perhaps, he strengthened his footing at the Rambouillet, where the author of *Les Précieuses Ridicules* was not loved. Molière abstained from noticing these attacks; but it presently occurred to him—and Boileau did not attempt to change his mind on the subject—that the abbé Cotin might be employed to good purpose as a character in a play designed to throw ridicule upon préciosité in its latest aspect. Such a play, entitled *Les Femmes Savantes*, was now in rehearsal at the Palais Royal.

Boileau may well have felt astonished at the dramatic skill displayed in the new comedy. Its materials were of the simplest character, but in point of interest, as of fineness of ridicule and general workmanship, it was not unworthy of a place by the side of the *Misanthrope*. The scene is laid in the house of a sensible citizen, Chrysale, the learned ladies being his wife, Philaminte, the most imperious of her sex; Belise, his sister, who fondly believes that she has the heart of every man who has seen her, and Armande, his daughter, a serious bel-esprit. It must be admitted that this well-constructed trio are consistent with themselves. Martime, their maid-servant, is dismissed because her gram-

mar is not impervious to criticism, and it is to be feared that a lackey with but hazy notions as to the centre of gravity will share her fate. The character designed to represent Cotin was a fashionable pretender to poetry, Trissotin, who pays court to Philaminte's daughter, Henriette, a clever girl, in the hope of enriching himself. His stage name was originally Tricotin, but as this indicated the original a little too plainly, it was changed to that which he now bore, and which, as being equivalent to treble-dyed fool, made matters a little worse. A learned man, he is received with rapture by the learned ladies, who are nearly ready to expire with delight when he reads them some wretched verses of his own—so wretched, in fact, that the audience must have screamed with laughter before he had done. Molière had taken these verses word for word from a forgotten volume of *galantes* by the abbé himself. Next comes Vadius, an unscrupulous plagiarist from the Greeks and Romans. Trissotin introduces him as a fine Grecian. "Greek!" exclaims Philaminte, "sister, he knows Greek!" "Niece," says Belise, "do you hear?—Greek!" "Greek!" says Armande! "ah, how delightful!" The two men beslave each other with praise, but not for long. Vadius accidentally wounds Trissotin's self-esteem; a row between them follows, and the Grecian, stung to fury by the taunts of the other, bounces out of the room. In the end, of course, Trissotin and the savantes are discomfited; Henriette, who pleasantly satirizes her relatives' mania, pairing off with a more sensible lover. Martine, we are told, was played to the life by a girl in Molière's domestic service,

and this was very probably the case, for he was ever on the watch for new talent.

The *Femmes Savantes* is said to have met at the outset with a frigid reception, but this statement is not to be reconciled with the effect which the comedy unquestionably created. Every bas-bleu in Paris felt the ridicule strike home. "Is it to be tolerated," Madame de Rambouillet indignantly asked Ménage, one of the most sensible of the précieuses, "that this miscreant should be permitted to torment us in this way?" Ménage had the honesty to praise the satire, though one of those believed to be assailed. "Madame," he replied, "I have seen the piece, which is singularly fine. As for myself, Molière has disavowed any intention to ridicule me." And he continued to flutter about the salons. Not so the abbé Cotin. He became the laughing-stock of Paris; he could not venture to show his face either in society or in the pulpit, and his friends deserted him in a body. Eventually, overwhelmed by the storm, he abruptly left Paris, never to be heard of again. He died soon afterward, and it is probable that the incident would never have been known if it had not caused a vacancy at the Academy. Molière was too large-hearted to view without pain the consequences of his satire. Had he foreseen them, no doubt, he would have held his hand; but he had nothing with which to reproach himself. *Les Femmes Savantes* did not overstep the bounds of legitimate satire, though the author may have drawn nearer to them than was usual with him. For the rest, the comedy was repeatedly performed before the court at Saint Cloud, there to be

treated by the king with as much favor as *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

### Académie d'Opéra.

In the early days of *Les Femmes Savantes* the Spanish players received their dismissal, but a more formidable rival to the French troupes than these foreigners had ever proved was now to arise. *La Toison d'Or* and *Andromède*, with the fanciful pieces which Molière composed at the instance of the king, had created a taste for plays with music, besides showing that the French language was not so unsuited to lyrical forms as had been alleged. Mindful of all this, the abbé Perrin persevered with the innovation he had introduced in *La Pastorale* and *Ariadne*, and in the summer of 1669 the king formally gave him leave to establish an "Académie d'opéra en vers François." By this time, in order to gratify the growing taste for musical plays, the marquis de Sourdéac had built a theatre in a tennis court in the Rue Mazarine, near the Luxembourg. Perrin obtained possession of it at a fixed rental, and here his *Pomone*, set to music by Cambert, was performed by a troupe of singers from the churches of Languedoc. It soon appeared that he was on the high road to fortune, for playgoers went in hundreds to listen to the first French opera. But the cup was rudely dashed from the abbé's lips. The marquis, impoverished by his outlays on the theatre, seized the receipts as security for his rent, and, being remonstrated with by Perrin in terms more vehement than polite, angrily resolved, in defiance of the privilege, to assume the direction of so profitable an

enterprise himself. The next opera given in the Rue Mazarine, *Les Peines et Plaisirs de l'Amour*, written by Gilbert, was produced under the auspices of this unscrupulous nobleman. Lulli, coveting the mine of wealth here discovered, profited by the quarrel to suggest that the interests of French opera would be safer in his hands than those of Perrin, to whom he was willing to give a small sum. He gained his point; the king gave him the exclusive right of representing musical pieces, forbade any one to enter the theatre without paying, and declared that to sing at the Académie was in no sense derogatory to one's dignity. Thus the founders of the French opera found themselves put out in the cold in the very hour of their triumph. Cambert, migrating in disgust to England, became director of music to Charles II, and Perrin, remaining in Paris, sought consolation in working upon elegies and sonnets. Lulli devoted himself to composing music, which was deservedly forgotten, while the libretti which Quinault prepared took a permanent place in operatic literature.

### *Mithridate.*

Racine's *Mithridate*, brought out at the Bourgogne, was an evident attempt to wrest dramatic supremacy from the venerable Corneille. Mithridate, with his strength of mind and unfaltering courage, his pride and resolution, his hatred and dissimulation, was one of the figures to which only the Corneille of thirty years before seemed capable of doing justice on the stage. But the comparison did not prove so direct as Racine originally

intended. The tastes of the play-going public, to say nothing of the necessity of creating for Champmêlé a character of tender and commanding interest, required him to throw an atmosphere of love and jealousy over the play. Accordingly, he represents Mithridate as consumed by a passion for Monime, the captive princess, and as having rivals in the persons of his sons Xipharès and Pharnace. Monime is an example of womanhood in its purest and most gracious aspect; and, if tradition may be trusted, nothing could have been more expressive and beautiful than Champmêlé's rendition of the part. The political interest of the tragedy was not very strong, but the scene where Mithridate enlarges upon his project of bringing Rome to his feet has a grandeur which Corneille only had surpassed, and which excused the partisans of the younger dramatist for believing that he had vanquished Corneille at his best.

Racine now became a member of the Academy, thereby attaining a distinction more and more coveted among Frenchmen as time went on. In the first instance it was proposed that the vacant chair should be assigned to the author of *Tartuffe*, though not unless he previously renounced his profession as an actor. Boileau was chosen to submit this proposal to his old friend, and no one seemed to doubt that it would be accepted. Molière could not be insensible to such a mark of esteem, and his chest complaint, aggravated by the fact that since his reconciliation with Armande he had returned to the use of meat and wine, furnished him with a sufficient reason for avoiding in future the exertion incident to acting. Yet, to the profound astonishment of the Acad-



emy, and indeed of Paris, he at once declined the offer. His sense of honor, he said, left him no alternative in the matter. "Honor!" Boileau sarcastically exclaimed; "prithce tell me what honor there is in disfiguring your face with moustachios, dressing yourself as a buffoon and being thrashed on the public stage." "More than a hundred persons," replied Molière, unmoved by the taunt, "are benefited by my appearing in a piece; and I will not insult a profession which I love, and to which I am so materially indebted, by purchasing any personal advantages at the cost of throwing a slur upon it." The Academy, as may be supposed, did not waive the condition under which their offer to Molière was made, and Racine was elected in his stead. In later years the members did something to atone for the short-sightedness of their predecessors. They reverently placed in their hall a bust of the great dramatist-actor. "Nothing," they wrote underneath it, "was wanting to his glory, but he was wanting to ours."

### **Le Malade Imaginaire.**

Molière's illness daily assumed a graver aspect, but as the shadow of death deepened around him, he wrote and played in one of the most vivacious of his comedies. This was the *Malade Imaginaire*, composed for the diversion of the king on his return from the first campaign in Holland. In the main it was another broadside against the doctors, if not against the art of healing itself, ridiculing the fear of death and the love of life. M. Argan's hypochondriacism is nothing less than a



mental disease. He takes as much medicine as would suffice for a regiment, and his doctors, needless to say, industriously flatter his self-deception. By a fine stroke of humor, too, his sick fancies are blended with a cautious frugality. His fond delight in the flowery language in which the bills against him are drawn up does not prevent him from cutting them down. "What particularly pleases me in my apothecary," he says, "is that his charges are so prettily worded. 'Pour rafraichir les entrailles de Monsieur, thirty sous.' Yes, M. Fleurent; but you must not flay your patients. If you are not more reasonable, I cannot afford to be ill." In the same spirit he resolves to marry his daughter Angelique to a pusillanimous medical student, one Thomas Diafoirus, and in the end becomes a doctor himself. By donning the garb of the faculty, he is told, he will cover all deficiencies, as under such a garb folly becomes wisdom and gibberish learning. In a pleasant interlude, supplied with music by Charpentier, the hypochondriac goes through a caricature in macaronic Latin—an idea suggested by Boileau over a supper at Madame de la Sablière's—of the ceremony actually observed on the admission of new doctors to the college. In attacking medical science itself, Molière was not well advised; but it would be too much to expect a man in the last stages of an incurable malady to have much faith in the art of healing. Fortunately, Argan was not a character which subjected him to a heavy strain, and the author acted it with the most whimsical effect. Paris again roared at the expense of the doctors, and by all others *Le Malade Imaginaire* was extolled as one of the merriest of

Molière's pieces, nor has their verdict been reversed by that of posterity.

### Death of Molière.

It was the last effort of the dying dramatist. Early in the day fixed for the fourth performance, he was so weak that his wife and Baron united in urging him not to play. But, as usual, he thought of others before himself. "How," he asked, "can I refuse to go on when so many persons' bread depends upon it? I should reproach myself for the distress I might cause them, having sufficient strength to prevent it." Nor was he to be diverted from his resolution. Soon after four o'clock, by which time an audience well disposed to appreciate the new satire on the physicians had filled the theatre to repletion, he again appeared in the high-backed arm-chair of the *malade imaginaire*. His acting showed no falling off in subtlety or humor, but to those who anxiously watched him from the side of the stage it was painfully evident that the comparatively slight exertion it entailed told heavily upon him. How curious it must have seemed to some of them that a man in such a state should be employed in giving expression to the fancies of a mere hypochondriac!

In the closing interlude, where Argan takes his oath as a new doctor, swearing to adhere to the remedies approved by antiquity, be they right or wrong, and to ignore modern discovery, there occurred something which had not been set down for him in the play. The last "juro" had hardly passed his lips when he was

seized with a convulsion. He sought to disguise it by forcing a laugh, but its ring was so hard and harsh that many among that hilarious assembly felt a shiver pass through their frames. The curtain was lowered, and the stricken dramatist, now fainting and speechless, was tenderly conveyed to his home. Soon he was able to speak. "My course," he said, "is run. My wife promised me a drugged pillow to make me sleep; let me have it. The only remedies I shrink from are those which have to be swallowed; they are enough to rob me of the little life that remains." While being put to bed he was seized with a fit of coughing; blood streamed from his mouth, and he faintly asked that the consolations of religion might not be denied him. Baron and Armande immediately sought out two ecclesiastics of the parish of St. Eustache, who, however, told them that the author of *Tartuffe* was not a fit person to receive the last consolations. The next priest applied to had a better sense of his duties, but he arrived only in time to see Molière die in the arms of two Sisters of Mercy, to whom he had long given shelter during their Lenten visits to Paris, and who, by a suggestive coincidence, had chanced to knock at his door as the ecclesiastics of St. Eustache were refusing to soothe his last moments.

#### Character and Writings of Molière.

The death of Molière cast a gloom over Paris which was not soon dispelled; for everyone knew this swarthy, thick-featured, neatly-dressed man, so grave in mien,

so refined and unassuming in manner, so self-respecting in his intercourse with rank, so observant of all that passed under his eyes, so full of the milk of human kindness, so ready to acknowledge the merits of others and undervalue his own, so frank and cordial with his chosen friends, so whimsical in the contrast presented between his sedate demeanor and the gleams of humor which shot from beneath his heavy black brows. No one had created so ineffaceable an impression upon the hearts and minds of those who knew him, whether at court, in salons, at the theatre, or in his own home. Louis XIV was as much grieved as the hardness of his nature would permit; Corneille may well have felt that his old age had been deprived of another great solace; the kindly Lafontaine wrote tender verse in praise of the dead; Chapelle took his loss so much to heart that for some hours his life was in danger; Boileau burst into tears, albeit not used to the melting mood. Condé, receiving from some poetaster an ill-turned epitaph on the author of *Tartuffe*, said: "Would that it had been his fate to write yours." As for the players of the Palais Royal, it was no ordinary blow that they suffered by their loss. Irritated as at times they may have been by the impossibility of pleasing him at rehearsal—for his judgment and taste were too fine to be easily satisfied—they held his name in grateful veneration, not only because his genius brought them prosperity, but as a result of the brotherly feeling he had manifested toward them. It was not forgotten that he had given them more than a due share of the profits of their commonwealth, had elected to remain one of

themselves instead of becoming their titular chief, had often been content to play comparatively trifling parts, and in their interest had worked when prudence counselled him to rest. To no one, however, was his death a matter of more poignant affliction than an aged domestic, named Laforet, probably the Lisette who had smiled upon his juvenile essays in the art of mimicry. Finding that what pleased her invariably diverted the public, he read his lighter pieces to her before they were produced, and if any passage he intended to be comic did not make her laugh he took care to improve it forthwith.

By the Parisians in general—by the lively world he had portrayed and amused—the tidings of his death were received with a feeling of profound regret. Every play-goer must have been consciously his debtor, and all were aware that in him a fine original genius had passed away. The accuracy of that estimate is not open to question. As a rule, it is true, he was content, as Shakespeare had been, to work with second-hand materials, though the pieces in which he relied almost exclusively upon his own powers of invention, such as *Tartuffe* and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, are not inferior in dramatic interest to any of their companions. In his search for subjects he seems to have traversed the whole field of ancient, mediæval and latter-day literature. His library, in addition to the Greek and Roman classics, included nearly two hundred and fifty volumes of French, Italian and Spanish plays—and there is no doubt that he had waded through them all for suggestions as to plot and detail. But he was no

servile plagiarist. His works bear the same relation to their sources as *Macbeth* bears to the weird legend on which it was based. He transmuted comparatively base metal into fine gold. Everything he borrowed was recast in a mould peculiar to himself, was to assume a form and color which he alone could impart.

The influence which Molière exercised over the public mind was all on the side of good. Judged by the standard of his own age, his plays contain nothing which he could have wished to omit. In his liveliest mood he is at pains to convey a beneficial lesson, sometimes, it is true, at the risk of appearing a little too didactic. He broke his lance full in the visor of evils and follies rampant under his eyes—religious hypocrisy, avarice, préciosité, medical quackery, insincerity of speech, the pride of the nobles, the affectation of learning, the pretensions of the wealthy bourgeoisie, and the narrow system upon which women in his time were educated—and he succeeded in modifying all. "Name the writer who has conferred the greatest lustre on my time," Louis XIV once said to Boileau. "Sire, c'est Molière," was the unhesitating reply. In these simple words the verdict of posterity was anticipated.

THE SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS

L'ÉCOLE DES MARIS.

COMÉDIE.

BY MOLIERE.



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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SGANARELLE, }  
ARISTE, } Brothers.

VALÈRE, *Lover to Isabella.*

ERGASTE, *Servant to Valère.*

A MAGISTRATE.

A NOTARY.

ISABELLA, }  
LÉONOR, } Sisters.

LISETTE, *Maid to Isabella.*

SCENE—A PUBLIC PLACE IN PARIS.

## The School for Husbands.

### ACT I. SCENE I.

Sganarelle, Ariste.

*Sganarelle.*—Pray, brother, let us talk less, and let each of us live as he likes. Though you have the advantage of me in years, and are old enough to be wise, yet I tell you that I mean to receive none of your reproofs; that my fancy is the only counsellor I shall follow, and that I am quite satisfied with my way of living.

*Ariste.*—But every one condemns it.

*Sgan.*—Yes, fools like yourself, brother.

*Ar.*—Thank you very much. It is a pleasant compliment.

*Sgan.*—I should like to know, since one ought to hear everything, what these fine critics blame in me.

*Ar.*—That surly and austere temper which shuns all the charms of society, gives a whimsical appearance to all your actions, and makes everything peculiar in you, even your dress.

*Sgan.*—I ought then to make myself a slave in fashion, and not to put on clothes for my own sake? Would you not, my dear elder brother—for, Heaven be thanked, so you are, to tell you plainly, by a matter of twenty years; and that is not worth the trouble of mentioning—would you not, I say, by your precious nonsense, persuade me to adopt the fashions of those young sparks of yours? Oblige me to wear those little hats which provide ventilation for their weak brains, and that flaxen hair, the vast curls whereof conceal the form of the human face; those little doublets but just below the arms,

and those big collars falling down to the navel; those sleeves which one sees at table trying all the sauces, and those petticoats called breeches; those tiny shoes, covered with ribbons, which make you look like feather-legged pigeons; and those large rolls wherein the legs are put every morning, as it were into the stocks, and in which we see these gallants straddle about with their legs as wide apart, as if they were the beams of a mill? I should doubtless please you, bedizened in this way; I see that you wear the stupid gewgaws which it is the fashion to wear.

*Ar.*—We should always agree with the majority, and never cause ourselves to be stared at. Extremes shock, and a wise man should do with his clothes as with his speech; avoid too much affectation, and without being in too great a hurry, follow whatever change custom introduces. I do not think that we should act like those people who always exaggerate the fashion, and who are annoyed that another should go further than themselves in the extremes which they affect; but I maintain that it is wrong, for whatever reasons, obstinately to eschew what every one observes; that it would be better to be counted among the fools than to be the only wise person, in opposition to every one else.

*Sgan.*—That smacks of the old man who, in order to impose upon the world, covers his gray hairs with a black wig.

*Ar.*—It is strange that you should be so careful always to fling my age in my face, and that I should continually find you blaming my dress as well as my cheerfulness. One would imagine that old age ought to think of nothing but death, since it is condemned to give up all enjoyment; and that it is not attended by enough ugliness of its own, but must needs be slovenly and crabbed.

*Sgan.*—However that may be, I am resolved to stick to my way of dress. In spite of the fashion, I like my cap so that my head may be comfortably sheltered beneath it; a good long doublet buttoned close, as it should be, which may keep the stomach warm, and promote a healthy digestion; a pair of breeches made exactly to fit my thighs; shoes, like those of our wise ancestors, in which my feet may not be tortured; and he who does not like the look of me may shut his eyes.

## SCENE II.

Léonor, Isabella, Lisette; Ariste and Sganarelle, conversing in an under-tone, unperceived.

*Léonor.*—(To Isabella.) I take it all on myself, in case you are scolded.

*Lisette.*—(To Isabella.) Always in one room, seeing no one?

*Isabella.*—Such is his humor.

*Léo.*—I pity you, sister.

*Lis.*—(To Léonor.) It is well for you, madam, that his brother is of quite another disposition; fate was very kind in making you fall into the hands of a rational person.

*Isa.*—It is a wonder that he did not lock me up to-day, or take me with him.

*Lis.*—I declare I would send him to the devil, with his Spanish ruff, and——

*Sganarelle.*—(Against whom Lisette stumbles.) Where are you going, if I may ask?

*Léo.*—We really do not know; I was urging my sister to talk a walk, and enjoy this pleasant and fine weather; but——

*Sgan.*—(To Léonor.) As for you, you may go wherever you please. (To Lisette.) You can run off; there are two of you together. (To Isabella.) But as for you, I forbid you—excuse me—to go out.

*Ariste.*—Oh, brother! let them go and amuse themselves.

*Sgan.*—I am your servant, brother.

*Ar.*—Youth will——

*Sgan.*—Youth is foolish, and old age too, sometimes.

*Ar.*—Do you think there is any harm in her being with Léonor?

*Sgan.*—Not so; but with me I think she is still better.

*Ar.*—But——

*Sgan.*—But her conduct must be guided by me; in short, I know the interest I ought to take in it.

*Ar.*—Have I less in her sister's?

*Sgan.*—By Heaven! each one argues and does as he likes. They are without relatives, and their father, our friend, entrusted them to us in his last hour, charging us both either to marry them, or, if we declined, to dispose of them hereafter. He gave us, in writing, the full authority of a father and a husband over them, from their infancy. You undertook to bring up that one; I charged myself with the care of this one. You govern yours at your pleasure. Leave me, I pray, to manage the other as I think best.

*Ar.*—It seems to me——

*Sgan.*—It seems to me, and I say it openly, that is the right way to speak on such a subject. You let your ward go about gaily and stylishly; I am content. You let her have footmen and a maid; I agree. You let her gad about, love idleness, be freely courted by dandies; I am quite satisfied. But I intend that mine shall live according to my fancy, and not according to her own; that she shall be dressed in honest serge, and wear only black on holidays; that, shut up in the house, prudent in bearing, she shall apply herself entirely to domestic concerns, mend my linen in her leisure hours, or else knit stockings for amusement; that she shall close her ears to the talk of young sparks, and never go out without some one to watch her. In short, flesh is weak; I know what stories are going about. I have no mind to wear horns, if I can help it; and as her lot requires her to marry me, I mean to be as certain of her as I am of myself.

*Isa.*—I believe you have no grounds for——

*Sgan.*—Hold your tongue, I shall teach you to go out without us!

*Léo.*—What, sir——

*Sgan.*—Good Heavens, madam! without wasting any more words, I am not speaking to you, for you are too clever.

*Léo.*—Do you regret to see Isabella with us?

*Sgan.*—Yes, since I must speak plainly; you spoil her for me. Your visits here only displease me, and you will oblige me by honoring me no more.

*Léo.*—Do you wish that I shall likewise speak my thoughts plainly to you? I know not how she regards all this; but

I know what effect mistrust would have on me. Though we are of the same father and mother, she is not much of my sister if your daily conduct produces any love in her.

*Lis.*—Indeed, all these precautions are disgraceful. Are we in Turkey, that women must be shut up? There, they say, they are kept like slaves; this is why the Turks are accursed by God. Our honor, sir, is very weak indeed, if it must be perpetually watched. Do you think, after all, that these precautions are any bar to our designs? that when we take anything into our heads, the cleverest man would not be but a donkey to us? All that vigilance of yours is but a fool's notion; the best way of all, I assure you, is to trust us. He who torments us puts himself in extreme peril, for our honor must ever be its own protector. To take so much trouble in preventing us is almost to give us a desire to sin. If I were suspected by my husband, I should have a very good mind to justify his fears.

*Sgan.*—(To Ariste.) This, my fine teacher, is your training. And you endure it without being troubled?

*Ar.*—Brother, her words should only make you smile. There is some reason in what she says. Their sex loves to enjoy a little freedom; they are but ill-checked by so much austerity. Suspicious precautions, bolts and bars, make neither wives nor maids virtuous. It is honor which must hold them to their duty, not the severity which we display toward them. To tell you candidly, a woman who is discreet by compulsion only is not often to be met with. We pretend in vain to govern all her actions; I find that it is the heart we must win. For my part, whatever care might be taken, I would scarcely trust my honor in the hands of one who, in the desires which might assail her, required nothing but an opportunity of falling.

*Sgan.*—That is all nonsense.

*Ar.*—Have it so; but still I maintain that we should instruct youth pleasantly, chide their faults with great tenderness, and not make them afraid of the name of virtue. Léonor's education has been based on these maxims. I have not made crimes of the smallest acts of liberty, I have always assented to her youthful wishes, and, thank Heaven, I

never repented of it. I have allowed her to see good company, to go to amusements, balls, plays. These are things which, for my part, I think are calculated to form the minds of the young; the world is a school which, in my opinion, teaches them better how to live than any book. Does she like to spend money on clothes, linen, ribbons—what then? I endeavor to gratify her wishes; these are pleasures which, when we are well-off, we may permit to the girls of our family. Her father's command requires her to marry me; but it is not my intention to tyrannize over her. I am quite aware that our years hardly suit, and I leave her complete liberty of choice. If a safe income of four thousand crowns a year, great affection and consideration for her, may, in her opinion, counterbalance in marriage the inequality of our age, she may take me for her husband; if not, she may choose elsewhere. If she can be happier without me, I do not object; I prefer to see her with another husband rather than that her hand should be given to me against her will.

*Sgan.*—Oh, how sweet he is! All sugar and honey!

*Ar.*—At all events, that is my disposition; and I thank Heaven for it. I would never lay down these strict rules which make children wish their parents dead.

*Sgan.*—But the liberty acquired in youth is not so easily withdrawn later on; all those feelings will please you but little when you have to change her mode of life.

*Ar.*—And why change it?

*Sgan.*—Why?

*Ar.*—Yes.

*Sgan.*—I do not know.

*Ar.*—Is there anything in it that offends honor?

*Sgan.*—Why, if you marry her, she may demand the same freedom which she enjoyed as a girl?

*Ar.*—Why not?

*Sgan.*—And you so far agree with her as to let her have patches and ribbons?

*Ar.*—Doubtless.

*Sgan.*—To let her gad about madly at every ball and public assembly?



*Ar.*—Yes, certainly.

*Sgan.*—And the beaux will visit at your house?

*Ar.*—What then?

*Sgan.*—Who will junket and give entertainments?

*Ar.*—With all my heart.

*Sgan.*—And your wife is to listen to their fine speeches?

*Ar.*—Exactly.

*Sgan.*—And you will look on at these gallant visitors with a show of indifference?

*Ar.*—Of course.

*Sgan.*—Go on, you old idiot. (To Isabella.) Get indoors, and hear no more of this shameful doctrine.

### SCENE III.

*Ariste, Sganarelle, Léonor, Lisette.*

*Ariste.*—I mean to trust to the faithfulness of my wife, and intend always to live as I have lived.

*Sganarelle.*—How pleased I shall be to see him victimized!

*Ar.*—I cannot say what fate has in store for me; but as for you, I know that if you fail to be so, it is no fault of yours, for you are doing everything to bring it about.

*Sgan.*—Laugh on, giggler! Oh, what a joke it is to see a railer of nearly sixty!

*Léonor.*—I promise to preserve him against the fate you speak of, if he is to receive my vows at the altar. He may rest secure; but I can tell you I would pass my word for nothing if I were your wife.

*Lisette.*—We have a conscience for those who rely on us; but it is delightful, really, to cheat such folks as you.

*Sgan.*—Hush, you cursed ill-bred tongue!

*Ar.*—Brother, you drew these silly words on yourself. Good-bye. Alter your temper, and be warned that to shut up a wife is a bad plan. Your servant.

*Sgan.*—I am not yours.

## SCENE IV.

Sganarelle, alone.

Oh, they are all well suited to one another! What an admirable family. A foolish old man with a worn-out body who plays the fop; a girl-mistress and a thorough coquette; impudent servants—no, wisdom itself could not succeed, but would exhaust sense and reason, trying to amend a household like this. By such associations, Isabella might lose those principles of honor which she learned amongst us; to prevent it, I shall presently send her back again to my cabbages and turkeys.

## SCENE V.

Valère, Sganarelle, Ergaste.

*Valère.*—(Behind.) Ergaste, that is he, the Argus whom I hate, the stern guardian of her whom I adore.

*Sganarelle.*—(Thinking himself alone.) In short, is there not something wonderful in the corruption of manners nowa days?

*Val.*—I should like to address him, if I can get a chance and try to strike up an acquaintance with him.

*Sgan.*—(Thinking himself alone.) Instead of seeing that severity prevail which so admirably formed virtue in other days, uncontrolled and imperious youth hereabout assumes. — (Valère bows to Sganarelle from a distance.)

*Val.*—He does not see that we bow to him.

*Ergaste.*—Perhaps his blind eye is on this side. Let us cross to the right.

*Sgan.*—I must go away from this place. Life in town only produces in me—

*Val.*—(Gradually approaching.) I must try to get an introduction.

*Sgan.*—(Hearing a noise.) Ha! I thought some one spoke. — (Thinking himself alone.) In the country, thank Heaven, the fashionable follies do not offend my eyes.

*Erg.*—(To Valère.) Speak to him.

*Sgan.*—What is it?— my ears tingle— There, all the recreations of our girls are but— (He perceives Valère bowing to him.) Do you bow to me?

*Erg.*—(To Valère.) Go up to him.

*Sgan.*—(Not attending to Valère.) Thither no coxcomb comes. (Valère again bows to him.) What the deuce!— (He turns and sees Ergaste bowing on the other side.) Another? What a great many bows!

*Val.*—Sir, my accosting you disturbs you, I fear?

*Sgan.*—That may be.

*Val.*—But yet the honor of your acquaintance is so great a happiness, so exquisite a pleasure, that I had a great desire to pay my respects to you.

*Sgan.*—Well.

*Val.*—And to come and assure you, without any deceit, that I am wholly at your service.

*Sgan.*—I believe it.

*Val.*—I have the advantage of being one of your neighbors, for which I thank my lucky fate.

*Sgan.*—That is all right.

*Val.*—But, sir, do you know the news going the round at court, and thought to be reliable?

*Sgan.*—What does it matter to me?

*Val.*—True; but we may sometimes be anxious to hear it? Shall you go and see the magnificent preparations for the birth of our Dauphin, sir?

*Sgan.*—If I feel inclined.

*Val.*—Confess that Paris affords us a hundred delightful pleasures which are not to be found elsewhere. The provinces are a desert in comparison. How do you pass your time?

*Sgan.*—On my own business.

*Val.*—The mind demands relaxation, and occasionally gives way, by too close attention to serious occupations. What do you do in the evening before going to bed?

*Sgan.*—What I please.

*Val.*—Doubtless no one could speak better. The answer is just, and it seems to be common sense to resolve never to do what does not please us. If I did not think you were too much occupied, I would drop in on you sometimes after supper.

*Sgan.*—Your servant.

#### SCENE VI.

*Valère, Ergaste.*

*Valère.*—What do you think of that eccentric fool?

*Ergaste.*—His answers are abrupt and his reception is churlish.

*Val.*—Ah! I am in a rage.

*Erg.*—What for?

*Val.*—Why am I in a rage? To see her I love in the power of a savage, a watchful dragon, whose severity will not permit her to enjoy a single moment of liberty.

*Erg.*—That is just what is in your favor. Your love ought to expect a great deal from these circumstances. Know, for your encouragement, that a woman watched is half-won, and that the gloomy ill-temper of husbands and fathers has always promoted the affairs of the gallant. I intrigue very little; for that is not one of my accomplishments. I do not pretend to be a gallant; but I have served a score of such sportsmen, who often used to tell me that it was their greatest delight to meet with churlish husbands, who never come home without scolding—downright brutes, who, without rhyme or reason, criticise the conduct of their wives in everything, and, proudly assuming the authority of a husband, quarrel with them before the eyes of their admirers. "One knows," they would say, "how to take advantage of this. The lady's indignation at this kind of outrage, on the one hand, and the considerate compassion of the lover, on the other, afford an opportunity for pushing matters far enough." In a word, the surliness of Isabella's guardian is a circumstance sufficiently favorable for you.

*Val.*—But I could never find one moment to speak to her in the four months that I have ardently loved her.

*Erg.*—Love quickens people's wits, though it has little effect on yours. If I had been——

*Val.*—Why, what could you have done? For one never sees her without that brute; in the house there are neither maids nor men-servants whom I might influence to assist me by the alluring temptation of some reward.

*Erg.*—Then she does not yet know that you love her?

*Val.*—It is a point on which I am not informed. Wherever the churl took this fair one, she always saw me like a shadow behind her; my looks daily tried to explain to her the violence of my love. My eyes have spoken much; but who can tell whether, after all, their language could be understood?

*Erg.*—It is true that this language may sometimes prove obscure, if it have not writing or speech for its interpreter.

*Val.*—What am I to do to rid myself of this vast difficulty, and to learn whether the fair one has perceived that I love her? Tell me some means or other.

*Erg.*—That is what we have to discover. Let us go in for a while—the better to think over it.

## ACT II. SCENE I.

Isabella, Sganarelle.

*Sganarelle.*—That will do; I know the house, and the person, simply from the description you have given me.

*Isabella.*—(Aside.) Heaven, be propitious, and favor to-day the artful contrivance of an innocent love!

*Sgan.*—Do you say they have told you that his name is Valère?

*Isa.*—Yes.

*Sgan.*—That will do; do not make yourself uneasy about it. Go inside, and leave me to act. I am going at once to talk to this young madcap.

*Isa.*—(As she goes in.) For a girl, I am planning a pretty bold scheme. But the unreasonable severity with which I am treated will be my excuse to every right mind.

## SCENE II.

Sganarelle, alone.

(Knocks at the door of Valère's house). Let us lose no time; here it is. Who's there? Why, I am dreaming! Hulloo, I say! hulloo somebody! hulloo! I do not wonder, after this information, that he came up to me just now so meekly. But I must make haste, and teach this foolish aspirant——

## SCENE III.

Valère, Sganarelle, Ergaste.

*Sganarelle.*—(To Ergaste, who has come out hastily.) A plague on the lubberly ox! Do you mean to knock me down—coming and sticking yourself in front of me like a post?

*Valère.*—Sir, I regret——

*Sgan.*—Ah! you are the man I want.

*Val.*—I, sir?

*Sgan.*—You. Your name is Valère, is it not?

*Val.*—Yes.

*Sgan.*—I am come to speak to you if you will allow me.

*Val.*—Can I have the happiness of rendering you any service?

*Sgan.*—No; but I propose to do you a good turn. That is what brings me to your house.

*Val.*—To my house, sir!

*Sgan.*—To your house. Need you be so much astonished?

*Val.*—I have good reason for it; I am delighted with the honor——

*Sgan.*—Do not mention the honor, I beseech you.

*Val.*—Will you not come in?

*Sgan.*—There is no need.

*Val.*—I pray you, enter.

*Sgan.*—No, I will go no further.

*Val.*—As long as you stay there I cannot listen to you.

*Sgan.*—I will not budge.

*Val.*—Well, I must yield. Quick, since this gentleman is resolved upon it, bring a chair.

*Sgan.*—I am going to talk standing.

*Val.*—As if I could permit such a thing!

*Sgan.*—What an intolerable delay!

*Val.*—Such incivility would be quite unpardonable.

*Sgan.*—Nothing can be so rude as not to listen to people who wish to speak to us.

*Val.*—I obey you, then.

*Sgan.*—You cannot do better. (They make many compliments about putting on their hats.) So much ceremony is hardly necessary. Will you listen to me?

*Val.*—Undoubtedly, and most willingly.

*Sgan.*—Tell me: do you know that I am guardian to a tolerably young and passably handsome girl who lives in this neighborhood, and whose name is Isabella?

*Val.*—Yes.

*Sgan.*—As you know it, I need not tell it to you. But do you know, likewise, that as I find her charming, I care for her otherwise than as a guardian, and that she is destined for the honor of being my wife?

*Val.*—No!

*Sgan.*—I tell it you, then; and also that it is as well that your passion, if you please, should leave her in peace.

*Val.*—Who?—I, sir?

*Sgan.*—Yes, you. Let us have no dissembling.

*Val.*—Who has told you that my heart is smitten by her?

*Sgan.*—Those who are worthy of belief.

*Val.*—Be more explicit.

*Sgan.*—She herself.

*Val.*—She!

*Sgan.*—She. Is not that enough? Like a virtuous young girl, who has loved me from childhood, she told me all just



now; moreover, she charged me to tell you, that, since she has everywhere been followed by you, her heart, which your pursuit greatly offends, has only too well understood the language of your eyes; that your secret desires are well known to her; and that to try more fully to explain a passion which is contrary to the affection she entertains for me, is to give yourself needless trouble.

*Val.*—She, you say, of her own accord, makes you——

*Sgan.*—Yes, makes me come to you and give you this frank and plain message; also, that, having observed the violent love wherewith your soul is smitten, she would earlier have let you know what she thinks about you if, perplexed as she was, she could have found any one to send this message by; but that at length she was painfully compelled to make use of me, in order to assure you, as I have told you, that her affection is denied to all save me; that you have been ogling her long enough; and that, if you have ever so little brains, you will carry your passion somewhere else. Farewell, till our next meeting. That is what I had to tell you.

*Val.*—(Aside.) Ergaste, what say you to such an adventure?

*Sgan.*—(Aside, retiring.) See how he is taken aback!

*Ergaste.*—(In a low tone to Valère.) For my part, I think that there is nothing in it to displease you; that a rather subtle mystery is concealed under it; in short, that this message is not sent by one who desires to see the love end which she inspires in you.

*Sgan.*—(Aside.) He takes it as he ought.

*Val.*—(In a low tone to Ergaste.) You think it a mystery——

*Erg.*—Yes—— But he is looking at us; let us get out of his sight

#### SCENE IV.

*Sganarelle*, alone.

How his face showed his confusion! Doubtless he did not expect this message. Let me call Isabella; she is show-

ing the fruits which education produces on the mind. Virtue is all she cares for; and her heart is so deeply steeped in it, that she is offended if a man merely looks at her.

## SCENE V.

Isabella, Sganarelle.

*Isabella.*—(Aside, as she enters.) I fear that my lover, full of his passion, has not understood my message rightly! Since I am so strictly guarded, I must risk one which shall make my meaning clearer.

*Sganarelle.*—Here I am, returned again.

*Isa.*—Well?

*Sgan.*—Your words wrought their full purpose; I have done his business. He wanted to deny that his heart was touched; but when I told him I came from you, he stood immediately dumbfounded and confused; I do not believe he will come here any more.

*Isa.*—Ah, what do you tell me? I much fear the contrary, and that he will still give us more trouble.

*Sgan.*—And why do you fear this?

*Isa.*—You had hardly left the house when, going to the window to take a breath of air, I saw a young man at yonder turning, who first came, most unexpectedly, to wish me good morning, on the part of this impertinent man, and then threw right into my chamber a box, enclosing a letter, sealed like a love-letter. I meant at once to throw it after him; but he had already reached the end of the street. I feel very much annoyed at it.

*Sgan.*—Just see his trickery and rascality!

*Isa.*—It is my duty quickly to have this box and letter sent back to this detestable lover; for that purpose I need some one; for I dare not venture to ask yourself—

*Sgan.*—On the contrary, darling, it shows me all the more your love and faithfulness; my heart joyfully accepts this task. You oblige me in this more than I can tell you.

*Isa.*—Take it then.

*Sgan.*—Well, let us see what he has dared to say to you.

*Isa.*—Heavens! Take care not to open it!

*Sgan.*—Why so?

*Isa.*—Will you make him believe that it is I? A respectable girl ought always to refuse to read the letters a man sends her. The curiosity which she thus betrays shows a secret pleasure in listening to gallantries. I think it right that this letter should be peremptorily returned to Valère unopened, that he may the better learn this day the great contempt which my heart feels for him; so that his passion may from this time lose all hope, and never more attempt such a transgression.

*Sgan.*—Of a truth she is right in this! Well, your virtue charms me, as well as your discretion. I see that my lessons have borne fruit in your mind; you show yourself worthy of being my wife.

*Isa.*—Still I do not like to stand in the way of your wishes. The letter is in your hands, and you can open it.

*Sgan.*—No, far from it. Your reasons are too good; I go to acquit myself of the task you impose upon me; I have likewise to say a few words quite near, and will then return hither to set you at rest.

#### SCENE VI.

*Sganarelle, alone.*

How delighted I am to find her such a discreet girl! I have in my house a treasure of honor. To consider a loving look treason, to receive a love-letter as a supreme insult, and to have it carried back to the gallant by myself! I should like to know, seeing all this, if my brother's ward would have acted thus, on a similar occasion. Upon my word, girls are what you make them—— Hulloo! (Knocks at Valère's door.)

#### SCENE VII.

*Sganarelle, Ergaste.*

*Ergaste.*—Who is there?

*Sganarelle*.—Take this; and tell your master not to presume so far as to write letters again, and send them in gold boxes; say also that Isabella is mightily offended at it. See, it has not even been opened. He will perceive what regard she has for his passion, and what success he can expect in it.

## SCENE VIII.

Valère, Ergaste.

*Valère*.—What has that surly brute just given you?

*Ergaste*.—This letter, sir, as well as this box, which he pretends that Isabella has received from you, and about which, he says, she is in a great rage. She returns it to you unopened. Read it quickly, and let us see if I am mistaken.

*Val*.—(Reads.) “This letter will no doubt surprise you; both the resolution to write to you and the means of conveying it to your hands may be thought very bold in me; but I am in such a condition, that I can no longer restrain myself. Well-founded repugnance to a marriage with which I am threatened in six days, makes me risk everything; and in the determination to free myself from it by whatever means, I thought I had rather choose you than despair. Yet do not think that you owe all to my evil fate; it is not the constraint in which I find myself that has given rise to the sentiments I entertain for you; but it hastens the avowal of them, and makes me transgress the decorum which the proprieties of my sex require. It depends on you alone to make me shortly your own; I wait only until you have declared your intentions to me before acquainting you with the resolution I have taken; but, above all, remember that time presses, and that two hearts, which love each other, ought to understand even the slightest hint.”

*Erg*.—Well, sir, is not this contrivance original? For a young girl she is not so very ignorant. Would one have thought her capable of these love stratagems?

*Val*.—Ah, I consider her altogether adorable. This evidence of her wit and tenderness doubles my love for her, and strengthens the feelings with which her beauty inspires me——

*Erg.*—Here comes the dupe; think what you will say to him.

## SCENE IX.

Sganarelle, Valère, Ergaste.

*Sganarelle.*—(Thinking himself alone.) Oh, thrice and four times blessed be the law which forbids extravagance in dress! No longer will the troubles of husbands be so great! women will now be checked in their demands. Oh, how delighted I am with the King for this proclamation! How I wish, for the peace of the same husbands, that he would forbid coquetry, as well as lace, and gold or silver embroidery. I have bought the law on purpose, so that Isabella may read it aloud; and, by and by, when she is at leisure, it shall be our entertainment after supper. (Perceiving Valère.) Well, Mr. Sandy-hair, would you like to send again love-letters in boxes of gold? You doubtless thought you had found some young flirt, eager for an intrigue, and melting before pretty speeches. You see how your presents are received! Believe me, you waste your powder and shot. Isabella is a discreet girl, she loves me and your love insults her. Aim at some one else, and be off!

*Valère.*—Yes, yes; your merits, to which every one yields, are too great an obstacle, sir. Though my passion be sincere, it is folly to contend with you for the love of Isabella.

*Sgan.*—It is really folly.

*Val.*—Be sure I should not have yielded to the fascination of her charms, could I have foreseen that this wretched heart would find a rival so formidable as yourself.

*Sgan.*—I believe it.

*Val.*—Now I know better than to hope; I yield to you, sir, and that too without a murmur.

*Sgan.*—You do well.

*Val.*—Reason will have it so; for you shine with so many virtues, that I should be wrong to regard with an angry eye the tender sentiments which Isabella entertains for you.

*Sgan.*—Of course.

*Val.*—Yes, yes, I yield to you; but at least I pray you—and it is the only favor, sir, begged by a wretched lover, of whose pangs this day you are the sole cause—I pray you, I say, to assure Isabella that, if my heart has been burning with love for her these three months, that passion is spotless, and has never fostered a thought at which her honor could be offended.

*Sgan.*—Ay.

*Val.*—That, relying solely on my heart's choice, my only design was to obtain her for my wife, if destiny had not opposed an obstacle to this pure flame in you, who captivated her heart.

*Sgan.*—Very good.

*Val.*—That, whatever happens, she must not think that her charms can ever be forgotten; that to whatever decrees of Heaven I must submit, my fate is to love her to my last breath; and that, if anything checks my pursuit, it is the just respect I have for your merits.

*Sgan.*—That is wisely spoken; I shall go at once to repeat these words, which will not be disagreeable to her. But, if you will listen to me, try to act so as to drive this passion from your mind. Farewell.

*Ergaste.*—(To Valère.) The excellent dupe!

#### SCENE X.

*Sganarelle, alone.*

I feel a great pity for this poor wretch, so full of affection. But it is unfortunate for him to have taken it into his head to try to storm a fortress which I have captured. (*Sganarelle* knocks at his door.)

#### SCENE XI.

*Sganarelle, Isabella.*

*Sganarelle.*—Never did lover display so much grief for a love-letter returned unopened! At last he loses all hope, and retires. But he earnestly entreated me to tell you, that, at

least, in loving you, he never fostered a thought at which your honor could be offended, and that, relying solely on his heart's choice, his only desire was to obtain you for a wife, if destiny had not opposed an obstacle to his pure flame, through me, who captivated your heart; that, whatever happens, you must not think that your charms can ever be forgotten by him; that, to whatever decrees of Heaven he must submit, his fate is to love you to his last breath; and that if anything checks his pursuit, it is the just respect he has for my merits. These are his very words; and, far from blaming him, I think him a gentleman, and I pity him for loving you.

*Isabella.*—(Aside.) His passion does not contradict my secret belief, and his looks have always assured me of its innocence.

*Sgan.*—What do you say?

*Isa.*—That it is hard that you should so greatly pity a man whom I hate like death; and that, if you loved me as much as you say, you would feel how he insults me by his addresses.

*Sgan.*—But he did not know your inclinations; and, from the uprightness of his intentions, his love does not deserve——

*Isa.*—Is it good intentions, I ask, to try and carry people off? Is it like a man of honor to form designs for marrying me by force, and taking me out of your hands? As if I were a girl to live after such a disgrace!

*Sgan.*—How?

*Isa.*—Yes, yes, I have been informed that this base lover speaks of carrying me off by force; for my part, I cannot tell by what secret means he has learned so early that you intend to marry me in eight days at the latest, since it was only yesterday you told me so. But they say that he intends to be beforehand with you, and not let me unite my lot to yours.

*Sgan.*—That is a bad case.

*Isa.*—Oh, pardon me! He is eminently a gentleman, who only feels toward me——



*Sgan.*—He is wrong; and this is past joking.

*Isa.*—Yes, your good nature encourages his folly. If you had spoken sharply to him just now, he would have feared your rage and my resentment; for even since his letter was rejected, he mentioned this design which has shocked me. As I have been told, his love retains the belief that it is well received by me; that I dread to marry you, whatever people may think, and should be rejoiced to see myself away from you.

*Sgan.*—He is mad!

*Isa.*—Before you he knows how to disguise; and his plan is to amuse you. Be sure the wretch makes sport of you by these fair speeches. I must confess that I am very unhappy. After all my pains to live honorably, and to repel the addresses of a vile seducer, I must be exposed to his vexatious and infamous designs against me!

*Sgan.*—There, fear nothing.

*Isa.*—For my part I tell you that if you do not strongly reprove such an impudent attempt, and do not find quickly means of ridding me of such bold persecutions, I will abandon all, and not suffer any longer the insults which I receive from him.

*Sgan.*—Do not be so troubled, my little wife. There, I am going to find him, to give him a good blowing up.

*Isa.*—Tell him at least plainly, so that it may be in vain for him to gainsay it, that I have been told of his intentions upon good authority; that, after this message, whatever he may undertake, I defy him to surprise me; and, lastly, that, without wasting any more sighs or time, he must know what are my feelings for you; that, if he wishes not to be the cause of some mischief, he should not require to have the same thing told twice over.

*Sgan.*—I will tell him what is right.

*Isa.*—But all this in such a way as to show him that I really speak seriously.

*Sgan.*—There, I will forget nothing, I assure you.

*Isa.*—I await your return impatiently. Pray, make as much haste as you can. I pine when I am a moment without seeing you.

*Sgan.*—There, ducky, my heart's delight, I will return immediately.

## SCENE XII.

*Sganarelle*, alone.

Was there ever a girl more discreet and better behaved? Oh, how happy I am! and what a pleasure it is to find a woman just after my own heart! Yes, that is how our women ought to be, and not, like some I know, downright flirts, who allow themselves to be courted, and make their simple husbands to be pointed at all over Paris. (Knocks at Valère's door.) Hulloo, my enterprising, fine gallant!

## SCENE XIII.

*Valère*, *Sganarelle*, *Ergaste*.

*Valère.*—Sir, what brings you here again?

*Sganarelle.*—Your follies.

*Val.*—How?

*Sgan.*—You know well enough what I wish to speak to you about. To tell you plainly, I thought you had more sense. You have been making fun of me with your fine speeches, and secretly nourish silly expectations. Look you, I wished to treat you gently; but you will end by making me very angry. Are you not ashamed, considering who you are, to form such designs as you do? to intend to carry off a respectable girl, and interrupt a marriage on which her whole happiness depends?

*Val.*—Who told you this strange piece of news, sir?

*Sgan.*—Do not let us dissimulate; I have it from Isabella, who sends you word by me, for the last time, that she has plainly enough shown you what her choice is; that her heart, entirely mine, is insulted by such a plan; that she would rather die than suffer such an outrage; and that you will cause a terrible uproar, unless you put an end to all this confusion.

*Val.*—If she really said what I have just heard, I confess that my passion has nothing more to expect. These expressions are plain enough to let me see that all is ended; I must respect the judgment she has passed.

*Sgan.*—If—— You doubt it then, and fancy all the complaints that I have made to you on her behalf are mere pretences! Do you wish that she herself should tell you her feelings? To set you right, I willingly consent to it. Follow me; you shall hear if I have added anything, and if her young heart hesitates between us two. (Goes and knocks at his own door.)

## SCENE XIV.

Isabella, Sganarelle, Valère, Ergaste.

*Isabella.*—What! you bring Valère to me! What is your design? Are you taking his part against me? And do you wish, charmed by his rare merits, to compel me to love him, and endure his visits?

*Sganarelle.*—No, my love; your affection is too dear to me for that; but he believes that my messages are untrue; he thinks that it is I who speak, and cunningly represent you as full of hatred for him, and of tenderness for me; I wish, therefore, from your own mouth, infallibly to cure him of a mistake which nourishes his love.

*Isa.*—(To Valère.) What! Is not my soul completely bared to your eyes, and can you still doubt whom I love?

*Val.*—Yes, all that this gentleman has told me on your behalf, Madam, might well surprise a man; I confess I doubted it. This final sentence, which decides the fate of my great love, moves my feelings so much that it can be no offense if I wish to have it repeated.

*Isa.*—No, no, such a sentence should not surprise you. Sganarelle told you my very sentiments; I consider them to be sufficiently founded on justice, to make their full truth clear. Yes, I desire it to be known, and I ought to be believed, that fate here presents two objects to my eyes, who, inspiring me with different sentiments, agitate my heart. One by a just choice, in which my honor is involved, has

all my esteem and love; and the other, in return for his affection, has all my anger and aversion. The presence of the one is pleasing and dear to me, and fills me with joy; but the sight of the other inspires me with secret emotions of hatred and horror. To see myself the wife of the one is all my desire; and rather than belong to the other, I would lose my life. But I have sufficiently declared my real sentiments; and languished too long under this severe torture. He whom I love must use diligence to make him whom I hate lose all hope, and deliver me by a happy marriage from a suffering more terrible than death.

*Sgan.*—Yes, darling, I intend to gratify your wish.

*Isa.*—It is the only way to make me happy.

*Sgan.*—You shall soon be so.

*Isa.*—I know it is a shame for a young woman so openly to declare her love.

*Sgan.*—No, no.

*Isa.*—But, seeing what my lot is, such liberty must be allowed me; I can, without blushing, make so tender a confession to him whom I already regard as a husband.

*Sgan.*—Yes, my poor child, darling of my soul!

*Isa.*—Let him think, then, how to prove his passion for me.

*Sgan.*—Yes, here, kiss my hand.

*Isa.*—Let him, without more sighing, hasten a marriage which is all I desire, and accept the assurance which I give him, never to listen to the vows of another. (She pretends to embrace Sganarelle, and gives her hand to Valère to kiss.)

*Sgan.*—Oh, oh, my little pretty face, my poor little darling, you shall not pine long, I promise you. (To Valère.) There, say no more. You see I do not make her speak; it is me alone she loves.

*Val.*—Well, Madam, well, this is sufficient explanation. I learn by your words what you urge me to do; I shall soon know how to rid your presence of him who so greatly offends you.

*Isa.*—You could not give me greater pleasure. For, to

be brief, the sight of him is intolerable. It is odious to me, and I detest it so much——

*Sgan.*—Eh! Eh!

*Isa.*—Do I offend you by speaking thus? Do I——

*Sgan.*—Heavens, by no means! I do not say that. But in truth, I pity his condition; you show your aversion too openly.

*Isa.*—I cannot show it too much on such an occasion.

*Val.*—Yes, you shall be satisfied; in three days your eyes shall no longer see the object which is odious to you.

*Isa.*—That is right. Farewell.

*Sgan.*—(To Valère.) I pity your misfortune, but——

*Val.*—No, you will hear no complaint from me. The lady assuredly does us both justice, and I shall endeavor to satisfy her wishes. Farewell.

*Sgan.*—Poor fellow! his grief is excessive. Stay, embrace me: I am her second self. (Embraces Valère.)

#### SCENE XV.

Isabella, Sganarelle.

*Sganarelle.*—I think he is greatly to be pitied.

*Isabella.*—Not at all.

*Sgan.*—For the rest, your love touches me to the quick, little darling, and I mean it shall have its reward. Eight days are too long for your impatience; to-morrow I will marry you, and will not invite——

*Isa.*—To-morrow!

*Sgan.*—You modestly pretend to shrink from it; but I well know the joy these words afford you; you wish it were already over.

*Isa.*—But——

*Sgan.*—Let us get everything ready for this marriage.

*Isa.*—(Aside.) Heaven! inspire me with a plan to put it off!

## ACT III. SCENE I.

Isabella, alone.

Yes, death seems to me a hundred times less dreadful than this fatal marriage into which I am forced; all that I am doing to escape its horrors should excuse me in the eyes of those who blame me. Time presses; it is night; now, then, let me fearlessly entrust my fate to a lover's fidelity.

## SCENE II.

Sganarelle, Isabella.

*Sganarelle.*—(Speaking to those inside the house.) Here I am once more; to-morrow they are going, in my name——

*Isabella.*—O Heaven!

*Sgan.*—Is it you, darling? Where are you going so late? You said when I left you that, being rather tired, you would shut yourself up in your room; you even begged that on my return I would let you be quiet till to-morrow morning——

*Isa.*—It is true; but——

*Sgan.*—But what?

*Isa.*—You see I am confused; I do not know how to tell you the reason.

*Sgan.*—Why, whatever can it be?

*Isa.*—A wonderful secret! It is my sister who now compels me to go out, and who, for a purpose for which I have greatly blamed her, has borrowed my room, in which I have shut her up.

*Sgan.*—What?

*Isa.*—Could it be believed? She is in love with that suitor whom we have discarded.

*Sgan.*—With Valère?

*Isa.*—Desperately! Her passion is so great that I can compare it with nothing; you may judge of its violence by her coming here alone, at this hour, to confide to me her love, and to tell me positively that she will die if she does

not obtain the object of her desire; that, for more than a year, a secret intercourse has kept up the ardor of their love; and that they had even pledged themselves to marry each other when their passion was new.

*Sgan.*—Oh, the wretched girl!

*Isa.*—That, being informed of the despair into which I had plunged the man whom she loves to see, she came to beg me to allow her to prevent a departure which would break her heart; to meet this lover to-night under my name, in the little street on which my room looks, where counterfeiting my voice, she may utter certain tender feelings, and thereby tempt him to stay; in short, cleverly to secure for herself the regard which it is known he has for me.

*Sgan.*—And do you think this—

*Isa.*—I? I am enraged at it. “What,” said I, “sister, are you mad? Do you not blush to indulge in such a love for one of those people who change every day? To forget your sex, and betray the trust put in you by the man whom Heaven has destined you to marry?”

*Sgan.*—He deserves it richly; I am delighted by it.

*Isa.*—Finally my vexation employed a hundred arguments to reprove such baseness in her, and enable me to refuse her request for to-night; but she became so importunate, shed so many tears, heaved so many sighs, said so often that I was driving her to despair if I refused to gratify her passion, that my heart was brought to consent in spite of me; and, to justify this night’s intrigue, to which affection for my own sister made me assent, I was about to bring Lucretia to sleep with me, whose virtues you extol to me daily; but you surprised me by your speedy return.

*Sgan.*—No, no, I will not have all this mystery at my house. As for my brother, I might agree to it; but they may be seen by some one in the street, and she whom I am to honor with my body must not only be modest and well-born; she must not even be suspected. Let us send the miserable girl away, and let her passion—

*Isa.*—Ah, you would overwhelm her with confusion, and she might justly complain of my want of discretion. Since



I must not countenance her design, at least wait till I send her away.

*Sgan.*—Well, do so.

*Isa.*—But above all, conceal yourself, I beg of you, and be content to see her depart without speaking one word to her.

*Sgan.*—Yes, for your sake I will restrain my anger; but as soon as she is gone, I will go and find my brother without delay. I shall be delighted to run and tell him of this business.

*Isa.*—I entreat you, then, not to mention my name. Good night; for I shall shut myself in at the same time.

*Sgan.*—Till to-morrow, dear—— How impatient I am to see my brother, and tell him of his plight! The good man has been victimized, with all his bombast! I would not have this undone for twenty crowns!

*Isa.*—(Within.) Yes, sister, I am sorry to incur your displeasure; but what you wish me to do is impossible. My honor, which is dear to me, would run too great a risk. Farewell, go home before it is too late.

*Sgan.*—There she goes, fretting finely, I warrant. Let me lock the door, for fear she should return.

*Isa.*—(Going out disguised.) Heaven! abandon me not in my resolve!

*Sgan.*—Whither can she be going? Let me follow her.

*Isa.*—(Aside.) Night, at least, favors me in my distress.

*Sgan.*—(Aside.) To the gallant's house! What is her design?

### SCENE III.

Valère, Isabella, Sganarelle.

*Valère.*—(Coming out quickly.) Yes, yes; I will this night make some effort to speak to——. Who is there?

*Isabella.*—(To Valère.) No noise, Valère; I have forestalled you; I am Isabella.

*Sganarelle.*—(Aside.) You lie, minx; it is not she. She is too staunch to those laws of honor which you forsake; you are falsely assuming her name and voice.

*Isa.*—(To Valère.) But unless by the holy bonds of matrimony——

*Val.*—Yes; that is my only purpose; and here I make you a solemn promise that to-morrow I will go wherever you please to be married to you.

*Sgan.*—(Aside.) Poor deluded fool!

*Val.*—Enter with confidence. I now defy the power of your duped Argus; before he can tear you from my love, this arm shall stab him to the heart a thousand times.

#### SCENE IV.

*Sganarelle, alone.*

Oh, I can assure you I do not want to take from you a shameless girl, so blinded by her passion. I am not jealous of your promise to her; if I am to be believed, you shall be her husband. Yes, let us surprise him with this bold creature. The memory of her father, who was justly respected, and the great interest I take in her sister, demand that an attempt, at least, should be made to restore her honor. Hulloo, there! (Knocks at the door of a magistrate.)

#### SCENE V.

*Sganarelle, a Magistrate, a Notary, Attendant with a lantern.*

*Magistrate.*—What is it?

*Sganarelle.*—Your servant, your worship. Your presence in official garb is necessary here. Follow me, please, with your lantern-bearer.

*Mag.*—We were going——

*Sgan.*—This is a very pressing business.

*Mag.*—What is it?

*Sgan.*—To go into that house and surprise two persons who must be joined in lawful matrimony. It is a girl with whom I am connected, and whom, under promise of marriage, a certain Valère has seduced and got into his house. She comes of a noble and virtuous family, but——

*Mag.*—If that is the business, it was well you met us, since we have a notary here.

*Sgan.*—Sir?

*Notary.*—Yes, a notary royal.

*Mag.*—And what is more, an honorable man.

*Sgan.*—No need to add that. Come to this doorway; make no noise, but see that no one escapes. You shall be fully satisfied for your trouble, but be sure and do not let yourself be bribed.

*Mag.*—What! do you think that an officer of justice—

*Sgan.*—What I said was not meant as a reflection on your position. I will bring my brother here at once; only let the lantern-bearer accompany me. (Aside.) I am going to give this placable man a treat. Hulloo! (Knocks at Ariste's door.)

#### SCENE VI.

Ariste, Sganarelle.

*Ariste.*—Who knocks? Why, what do you want, brother?

*Sganarelle.*—Come, my fine teacher, my superannuated buck; I shall have something pretty to show you.

*Ar.*—How?

*Sgan.*—I bring you good news.

*Ar.*—What is it?

*Sgan.*—Where is your Léonor, pray?

*Ar.*—Why this question? She is, as I think, at a friend's house at a ball.

*Sgan.*—Eh! Oh, yes! Follow me; you shall see to what ball Missy is gone.

*Ar.*—What do you mean?

*Sgan.*—You have brought her up very well indeed. It is not good to be always finding fault; the mind is captivated by much tenderness; and suspicious precautions, bolts and bars make neither wives nor maids virtuous; we cause them to do evil by so much austerity; their sex demands a little freedom. Of a verity she has taken her fill of it, the artful girl; and with her, virtue has grown very complaisant.

*Ar.*—What is the drift of such a speech?

*Sgan.*—Bravo, my elder brother! it is what you richly deserve; I would not for twenty pistoles that you should have missed this fruit of your silly maxims. Look what our lessons have produced in these two sisters: the one avoids the gallants, the other runs after them.

*Ar.*—If you will not make your riddle clearer——

*Sgan.*—The riddle is that her ball is at Valère's; that I saw her go to him under cover of night, and that she is at this moment in his arms.

*Ar.*—Who?

*Sgan.*—Léonor.

*Ar.*—A truce to jokes, I beg of you.

*Sgan.*—I joke—— He is excellent with his joking! Poor fellow! I tell you, and tell you again, that Valère has your Léonor in his house, and that they had pledged each other before he dreamed of running after Isabella.

*Ar.*—This story is so very improbable——

*Sgan.*—He will not believe it, even when he sees it. I am getting angry; upon my word, old age is not good for much when brains are wanting! (Laying his finger on his forehead.)

*Ar.*—What! brother, you mean to——

*Sgan.*—I mean nothing, upon my soul! Only follow me. Your mind shall be satisfied directly. You shall see whether I am deceiving you, and whether they have not pledged their troth for more than a year past.

*Ar.*—Is it likely she could thus have agreed to this engagement without telling me?—me! who in everything, from her infancy, ever displayed toward her a complete readiness to please, and who a hundred times protested I would never force her inclinations.

*Sgan.*—Well, your own eyes shall judge of the matter. I have already brought here a magistrate and a notary. We are concerned that the promised marriage shall at once restore to her the honor she has lost; for I do not suppose you are so mean-spirited as to wish to marry her with this stain

upon her, unless you have still some arguments to raise you above all kinds of ridicule.

*Ar.*—For my part, I shall never be so weak as to wish to possess a heart in spite of itself. But, after all, I cannot believe——

*Sgan.*—What speeches you make! Come, this might go on forever.

#### SCENE VII.

Sganarelle, Ariste, a Magistrate, a Notary.

*Magistrate.*—There is no need to use any compulsion here, gentlemen. If you wish to have them married, your anger may be appeased on the spot. Both are equally inclined to it; Valère has already given under his hand a statement that he considers her who is now with him as his wife.

*Ariste.*—The girl——

*Mag.*—Is within, and will not come out unless you consent to gratify their desires.

#### SCENE VIII.

Valère, a Magistrate, a Notary, Sganarelle, Ariste.

*Valère.*—(At the window of his house.) No, gentlemen; no man shall enter here until your pleasure be known to me. You know who I am; I have done my duty in signing the statement, which they can show you. If you intend to approve of the marriage, you must also put your names to this agreement; if not, prepare to take my life before you shall rob me of the object of my love.

*Sganarelle.*—No, we have no notion of separating you from her. (Aside.) He has not yet been undeceived in the matter of Isabella. Let us make the most of his mistake.

*Ariste.*—(To Valère.) But is it Léonor?

*Sgan.*—Hold your tongue!

*Ar.*—But——

*Sgan.*—Be quiet!

*Ar.*—I want to know——

*Sgan.*—Again! Will you hold your tongue, I say?

*Val.*—To be brief: whatever be the consequence, Isabella has my solemn promise; I also have hers; if you consider everything, I am not so bad a match that you should blame her.

*Ar.*—What he says is not——

*Sgan.*—Be quiet! I have a reason for it. You shall know the mystery. (To Valère.) Yes, without any more words, we both consent that you shall be the husband of her who is at present in your house.

*Magistrate.*—The contract is drawn up in those very terms, and there is a blank for the name, as we have not seen her. Sign. The lady can set you all at ease by-and-by.

*Val.*—I agree to the arrangement.

*Sgan.*—And so do I, with all my heart. (Aside.) We will have a good laugh presently. (Aloud.) There, brother, sign; yours the honor to sign first.

*Ar.*—But why all this mystery——

*Sgan.*—The deuce! what hesitation. Sign, you simpleton.

*Ar.*—He talks of Isabella, and you of Léonor.

*Sgan.*—Are you not agreed, brother, if it be she, to leave them to their mutual promises?

*Ar.*—Doubtless.

*Sgan.*—Sign, then; I shall do the same.

*Ar.*—So be it. I understand nothing about it.

*Sgan.*—You shall be enlightened.

*Mag.*—We will soon return.

(Exeunt Magistrate and Notary into Valère's house.)

*Sgan.*—(To Ariste.) Now, then, I will give you a cue to this intrigue. (They retire to the back of the stage.)

## SCENE IX.

Léonor, Sganarelle, Ariste, Lisette.

*Léonor.*—Ah, what a strange martyrdom! What bores all those young fools appear to me! I have stolen away from the ball, on account of them.

*Lisette.*—Each of them tried to make himself agreeable to you.

*Léo.*—And I never endured anything more intolerable. I should prefer the simplest conversation to all the babblings of these say-nothings. They fancy that everything must give way before their flaxen wigs, and think they have said the cleverest witticism when they come up, with their silly chaffing tone, and rally you stupidly about the love of an old man. For my part, I value more highly the affection of such an old man than all the giddy raptures of a youthful brain. But do I not see——

*Sganarelle.*—(To Ariste.) Yes, so the matter stands. (Perceiving Léonor.) Ah, there she is, and her maid with her.

*Ariste.*—Léonor, without being angry, I have reason to complain. You know whether I have ever sought to restrain you, and whether I have not stated a hundred times that I left you full liberty to gratify your own wishes; yet your heart, regardless of my approval, has pledged its faith, as well as its love, without my knowledge. I do not repent of my indulgence; but your conduct certainly annoys me; it is a way of acting which the tender friendship I have borne you does not merit.

*Léo.*—I know not why you speak to me thus; but believe me, I am as I have ever been; nothing can alter my esteem for you; love for any other man would seem to me a crime; if you will satisfy my wishes, a holy bond shall unite us to-morrow.

*Ar.*—On what foundation, then, have you, brother——

*Sgan.*—What! Did you not come out of Valère's house? Have you not been declaring your passion this very day? And have you not been for a year past in love with him?



*Léo.*—Who has been painting such pretty pictures of me? Who has been at the trouble of inventing such falsehoods?

## SCENE X.

*Isabella, Valère, Léonor, Ariste, Sganarelle, Magistrate, Notary, Lisette, Ergaste.*

*Isabella.*—Sister, I ask you generously to pardon me, if, by the freedom I have taken, I have brought some scandal upon your name. The urgent pressure of a great necessity, suggested to me, some time ago, this disgraceful stratagem. Your example condemns such an escapade; but fortune treated us differently. (To Sganarelle.) As for you, sir, I will not excuse myself to you. I serve you much more than I wrong you. Heaven did not design us for one another. As I found I was unworthy of your love, and undeserving of a heart like yours, I vastly preferred to see myself in another's hands.

*Valère.*—(To Sganarelle.) For me, I esteem it my greatest glory and happiness to receive her, sir, from your hands.

*Ariste.*—Brother, you must take this matter quietly. Your own conduct is the cause of this. I can see it is your unhappy lot that no one will pity you, though they know you have been made a fool of.

*Lisette.*—Upon my word, I am glad of this. This reward of his mistrust is a striking retribution.

*Léonor.*—I do not know whether the trick ought to be commended; but I am quite sure that I, at least, cannot blame it.

*Ergaste.*—His star condemns him to be a cuckold; it is lucky for him he is only a retrospective one.

*Sganarelle.*—(Recovering from the stupor into which he had been plunged.) No, I cannot get the better of my astonishment. This faithlessness perplexes my understanding. I think that Satan in person could be no worse than such a jade! I could have sworn it was not in her. Unhappy he who trusts a woman after this! The best of them are always full of mischief; they were made to damn the whole world.

I renounce the treacherous sex forever, and give them to the devil with all my heart!

*Erg.*—Well said.

*Ar.*—Let us all go to my house. Come, M. Valère, to-morrow we will try to appease his wrath.

*Lis.*—(To the audience.) As for you, if you know any churlish husbands, by all means send them to school with us.

LES PLAIDEURS;

OR,

THE SUITORS.

A COMEDY BY RACINE.

*(Translated by Irving Browne.)*

## PERSONAGES.

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*DANDIN, a Weak-minded Judge.*

*LÉANDRE, his Son, a gay youth.*

*CHICANEAU, a Litigious Burgess.*

*PETIT-JEAN, Porter to Dandin.*

*L'INTIMÉ, Secretary to Dandin.*

*A PROMPTER.*

*ISABELLE, Chicaneau's Daughter, in love with Léandre*

*COUNTESS, Litigious.*

*SCENE—A CITY IN LOWER NORMANDY.*

## **The Suitors.**

### **PRELUDE.**

As *The Wasps* of Aristophanes is directed against the litigious class among the Athenians, so does *The Suitors* of Racine, adapted from that play, turn into ridicule the pettifoggery then so common in Paris and elsewhere in France. It was, as is said, a troublesome and disastrous lawsuit, to which Racine was a party, which suggested to him the subject of this, his only comedy. As the characters will unfold themselves, it will here be sufficient to remind the reader of the significance of some of their names. Dandin means simpleton; Intimé, respondent; Chicaneau, a pettifogger; Pimbesche, one of the countess' titles, an impertinent minx. While, as the author states, the aim of the comedy was to excite laughter, he indulges in no indecent ambiguities or coarse jocularities, such as are found in the pages of Aristophanes.

### **ACT FIRST. SCENE I.**

*Petit-Jean.*—(Dragging a large bag of law papers.) He who in the future puts his trust is mad, I say;  
Those who laugh on Friday will cry on Saturday.  
Into his service a judge took me last year,—

To be his porter, from Amiens brought me here.  
 To raise a laugh at us these Normans always help,  
 But when with wolves, 'tis said, one quickly learns to  
     yelp.

Although from Picardy, good sense I did not lack,  
 But with the best of them I made my whip to crack.  
 They spoke to me uncovered—the men of consequence—  
 'Twas "Mr. de Little-John"—how great their deference!  
 But honor without money is a malady.

I was the model porter of a comedy.  
 No use for them to knock, and doff their hats to me,  
 No one gets in our house without the porter's fee.  
 No pay, no service—my door was shut the faster.  
 True, once in a while I accounted with my master,  
 And gave him something back. And I was always sent  
 To purchase hay and candles for the establishment,  
 But I lost naught by that. Indeed, for aught I saw,  
 I well might have afforded also to give the straw.  
 'Twas pity that on business he'd so set his heart.  
 At court he was the first to come, last to depart,  
 And often all alone—such actions would you think?—  
 He'd there lie down and sleep without his food or drink.  
 "Mr. Perrin-Dandin," sometimes to him I've said,  
 "Truth is, you're every day too early out of bed.  
 He who would travel far should ever spare his nag,  
 Eat, drink, and sleep—keep up spirits that never flag."  
 He took no heed. He's so laborious, and in fact  
 So little sleep he takes, that many say he's cracked.

## SCENE II.

*L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.*

*L'Intimé.*—Little-John, ho, Little-John!

*Petit-Jean.*—

*L'Intimé!*

He is afraid that I have taken cold this way. (*Aside.*)

*L'Int.*—What the devil do you so early in the street?

*Petit-J.*—Is it necessary to stay there on one's feet,

Always to watch a man, and hear him yelling out?  
What lungs he has! He is bewitched, beyond a doubt.

*L'Int.*—Good!

*Petit-J.*— Just now I said to him, rubbing up my hair,  
That I would like to sleep. "Present thy formal prayer,  
Whereas thou want'st to sleep," he said with gravity.  
I fall asleep e'en now, only in telling thee.  
Good-night.

*L'Int.*— But how good-night? What devil do I care,  
If—but I hear a noise about the door up there.

### SCENE III.

Dandin, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

*Dandin.*—(At the window.) Petit-Jean! L'Intimé!

*L'Intimé.*—(To Petit-Jean.) Peace!

*Dand.*— I am here alone.  
My jailors then have made default, thank heaven, and  
gone.  
If I should give them time they would again appear,  
So, to enlarge ourselves, we'll leap the window here.  
Court is adjourned.

*L'Int.*— O, how he jumps!

*Petit-Jean.*— O, sir, you're caught.

*Dand.*—Stop thief! Stop thief!

*Petit-J.*— O, we shall hold you as we ought.

*L'Int.*—No use of crying out, sir.

*Dand.*— Help here, quick! I'm beat.

### SCENE IV.

Léandre, Dandin, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

*Léandre.*—Quick, now, a light! I hear my father in the street.  
My father, why go out at this untimely hour?  
Where go you in the night?



*Dandin.*—

I wish t'assert my power.

*Léan.*—And over whom? All are asleep.

*Petit-Jean.*—

In faith, I don't sleep much.

*Léan.*—What bags of documents! His very knees they touch.

*Dand.*—Within doors for three months I will not ask admission,  
Of actions and of bags I've made a great provision.

*Léan.*—And who will feed you?

*Dand.*—

The inn-keeper, I suppose.

*Léan.*—But father, where'll you sleep?

*Dand.*—

At court and in my clothes.

*Léan.*—My father, it is better you shouldn't go out thus.

Sleep here, in your own house, and take your meals  
with us.

Suffer yourself to be by reason guided still,  
And for your health——

*Dand.*—

Why, I prefer to be unwell.

*Léan.*—You're that too much already. Take rest, for which you  
groan,

Or very soon you'll be reduced to skin and bone.

*Dand.*—Rest! Ah, your father by yourself you'd regulate;

Do you suppose a judge does naught but hold high state?  
To scour the streets like gay young men in their ca-  
rouses?

To run to balls by day, by night to gaming-houses?

Money is not earned so fast in my dominion.

Each one of thy fine ribbons costs me 'n opinion.

My gown makes you ashamed! And you a judge's son!

Would'st act the gentleman? Oh, fie, Dandin, have done!

Consider in my wardrobe and in my sleeping-room

The portraits of the Dandins; all these have worn the  
gown.

It is a good profession. Compare, too, price for price,

The New Year gifts of a good judge, and those of a mar-  
quis.

Remark what we shall be at the end of next December:—

What's then your gentleman? A post in the ante-cham-  
ber.

How many a one of these, the proudest, you've seen  
linger

About my audience, and there to blow his finger,  
Or hand in pocket, cloak on nose; finally to sit  
And warm himself a while by turning at my spit.  
This is the way one treats such folks. Ah, my poor lad,  
Have you such inculcations from your dead mother had?  
Poor Babonette! As I recall to memory,  
She never failed at every term of court to be.  
Never, no, never, would she leave me for a day,  
And heaven only knows what oft she brought away.  
Rather than empty-handed to our house return,  
The very napkins at the inn she would not spurn.  
This is the way fine houses are fixed up. Oh, you  
Will always be a fool.

*Léan.*— Come, you'll be frozen through,  
My father. Little-John, conduct your master back.  
Put him to bed; in door and window leave no crack;  
Let all be fastened, so he be from cold protected.

*Petit-J.*—Cause then at least a railing there to be erected.

*Dand.*—What! shall I be sent to bed in fashion thus abnormal?  
Obtain an order that I sleep, in manner formal.

*Léan.*—For once, my father, lie down in any fashion.

*Dand.*—I'll go, but I intend to put you in a passion.  
I will not go to sleep.

*Léan.*— Oh, well, that's all in vain.  
Don't leave him here alone. You, L'Intimé, remain.

#### SCENE V.

Léandre, L'Intimé.

*Léandre.*—I wish to speak with you a moment here alone.

*L'Intimé.*—What! must you needs be guarded?

*Léan.*— That I well may own.

Alas! I have my weakness well as my father.

*L'Int.*—Oh, you would judge, then?

*Léan.*—(Pointing to the house of Isabelle.) Seek there the mystery rather.

You know that house?

*L'Int.*— I understand you now at last.  
The dickens! Cupid has untimely got you fast.  
Undoubtedly you'd speak to me of Isabelle.  
A hundred times I've said, she's wise, she looks quite well;  
But Mr. Chicaneau, you surely ought t' have pondered,  
The greater part of his estate in law has squandered;  
Whom does he not prosecute? I believe all France,  
Unless he dies, in court will be compelled to dance.  
Hard by the judge he's taken up his residence;  
One forever sues, the other passes sentence.  
Before your affair is done, the chances are that he  
Will sue the parson, son-in-law, and notary.

*Léan.*—I know it well as you, but spite of all, oh, how, sir,  
I pine for Isabelle.

*L'Int.*— Well, then, why not espouse her?  
Nothing to do but speak—no need of preparation.

*Léan.*—But things move not so fast as your imagination.  
Her father is a savage whom I greatly fear.  
None but a bailiff, sergeant, or solicitor  
Can ever see his daughter; the poor Isabelle,  
Imprisoned in her house, laments invisible;  
In grief she sees her youthful freshness dissipate,  
In smoke my passion, and in lawsuits his estate.  
She'll utterly be ruined unless he is restrained.  
Do you not know some honest forger, to be gained  
To serve his friends—for compensation, understand—  
Some zealous sergeant?

*L'Int.*— Many such at your command.

*Léan.*—But still?

*L'Int.*— Oh, sir, if my deceased, lamented sire  
Were still alive, he would accomplish your desire.  
He'd do more in a day than some in half a year.  
Graven in wrinkles on his face did writs appear.  
He would arrest for you the carriage of a prince,

And nab the prince himself; and if in any province,  
 One of his bailiffs caught twenty castigations,  
 Father took nineteen-twentieths of the compensations.  
 But what do you require? Am not I the master's son?  
 I'll serve you.

*Léan.*— You?

*L'Int.*— Better than a sergeant would have done.

*Léan.*—You'd carry to the father a forged writ?

*L'Int.*— No doubt.

*Léan.*—And give this billet to the daughter?

*L'Int.*— Yes, why not?

I'm up to both.

*Léan.*— I hear a noise; come now,—I see;

We'll elsewhere go and regulate our scheme.

#### SCENE VI.

Chicaneau, Petit-Jean.

*Chicaneau.*—(Going and returning.)

*La Brie,*

Let the house be guarded, I soon will home repair.  
 Don't permit a person to go above the stair.  
 Convey this letter bound to Maine unto the post,  
 And from my warren take three rabbits fit to roast,  
 And carry them to my solicitor to-day.  
 Make his clerk taste my wine if he should come this way.  
 Deliver him the bag that's in my room suspended.  
 Is that all? To visit me there perhaps intended  
 A certain tall, gaunt man who gets me evidence,  
 And swears himself whenever I am at a pinch;  
 Let him await. I fear my judge is out. The clock  
 Has sounded four. We'll go and at his entrance knock.

*Petit-Jean.*—(Opening the door.) Who's there?

*Chica.*— Can I his honor see?

*Petit-J.*—(Shutting the door.) No.

*Chica.*—(Knocking.) Well, can't I then

Say a word to Mr. Secretary?

*Petit-J.*—(Shutting the door.) No, again.

*Chica.*—(Knocking.) And Mr. Porter?

*Petit-J.*— That's myself.

*Chica.*—(Giving him money.) Ah, drink my health,  
I pray you, sir.

*Petit-J.*—(Taking the money.) Thanks, sir, and may you long  
have wealth. (Shutting the door.)  
But come again to-morrow.

*Chica.*— My money then restore.  
Truly, this world is growing wicked more and more.  
I've seen the time when suits did not disturb one's ease;  
You'd buy a half a dozen for a crown apiece.  
But nowadays my whole estate is hardly more  
Than would suffice to buy the porter at the door.  
But madam the countess of Pimbesche approaches—  
Affairs of haste, I think, from the way she rushes.

## SCENE VII.

Countess, Chicaneau.

*Chicaneau.*—Madam, there's no admittance.

*Countess.*— Just as I prophesied.  
To speak the truth, my servants will drive me soon be-  
side

Myself; to get them out of bed, in vain I scold;  
And every day I have to wake them, young and old.

*Chica.*—T' conceal himself he finds it indispensable.

*Count.*—To speak to him these two days I've not been able.

*Chica.*—My adversary's strong; I've everything to dread.

*Count.*—After what's done to me, no use to ope my head.

*Chica.*—If, however, I am right—

*Count.*— O sir, such decrees!

*Chica.*—I'll submit my case to you. Listen, if you please.

*Count.*—That you may see their baseness, sir, let me relate—

*Chica.*—At bottom there is really nothing—

*Count.*—

Let me state—

*Chica.*—Here are the facts: Fifteen or twenty years an ass  
 Over my meadow had accustomed been to pass  
 And there disport himself, by which much waste he made,  
 For which before the village judge my plaint I laid.  
 The ass I attach. The appraiser's nominated,  
 At trusses two of hay the waste is estimated.  
 In short, with this award, after a year, they fling  
 Me empty out of court. And then an appeal I bring.  
 Now, while th' appeal in court was sleeping at its ease,—  
 Remark particularly, madam, if you please,—  
 My lawyer, Drollichon—no fool—on my petition,  
 Obtained by bribery a premature decision,  
 And thus I gain my cause. On that, what next is done?  
 My adversary stays the execution.  
 But while procedure on procedure thickens,  
 My adversary lets in my field his chickens.  
 To ascertain, unto the court it then seemed meet,  
 How much of grass one chicken in one day can eat.  
 Issue at last is joined. In fine, when everything  
 In that condition stands, the cause they say they'll bring  
 To 'n end, April fifteenth or sixteenth, 'fifty-six.  
 I write fresh score. I furnish evidence, and mix  
 Plaints, pleas and inquests, inspections compulsory,  
 Appraisals, transfers, three interlocutory  
 Orders, and grievances, fresh acts, reports, res gestæ;  
 I forge my name in letters issued by majesty;  
 Fourteen appointments, twenty writs, six allegations,  
 Productions six-and-twenty, twenty just'fications,  
 Judgment in short. My cause is swallowed in expense  
 Amounting to about five or six thousand francs.  
 Call you this doing right? Is this the way they ad-  
 judge?  
 After fifteen or twenty years! There's one refuge,—  
 The petition civil,—that still remains to me.  
 I am not quite defeated. But you, too, I see,  
 Are litigating?

*Count.*—

Would to heaven!

*Chica.*—

My books I'll burn.

*Count.*—I—

*Chica.*— Six thousand francs! Of hay, two trusses in return!

*Count.*—Sir, all my litigations they're seeking to restrain;  
Four or five small issues are all that now remain;  
One suit against my husband, and another suit  
Against my father and my children; why they do't  
I know not, nor can tell what woes they have denounced  
Against me, miserable; but they have pronounced  
This judgment: that, supplied with food and clothing  
due,  
For th' balance of my life I am forbid to sue.

*Chica.*—To sue?

*Count.*— To sue.

*Chica.*— Truly, this is a dark affair.  
I'm much surprised at it.

*Count.*— I'm driven to despair.

*Chica.*—To treat nobility as if of no account.  
But your allowance, madam, is of some amount?

*Count.*—To manage to exist on it, no doubt I can, sir;  
But living without law, for me will never answer.

*Chica.*—With our life-blood these folks will pamper their diges-  
tion,  
And we can't say a word! But, if it's a fair question,  
How long have you been lawing?

*Count.*— My memory is not clear.  
Some thirty years or more.

*Chica.*— Why, that's not long.

*Count.*— Oh, dear!

*Chica.*—And how old may you be? You have a beautiful visage.

*Count.*—Oh, some sixty years.

*Chica.*— Indeed! why, for lawsuits, this age  
Is best of all.

*Count.*— Well, let them work; they've not yet done.  
I'll sell my last chemise. I will have all or none.

*Chica.*—Now, madam, listen to me. This is what you must do.

*Count.*—Yes, sir, as if my father, I will believe in you.



*Chica.*—I would go unto my judge.

*Count.*— Oh, yes, sir, I will go.

*Chica.*—And throw myself before him.

*Count.*— Myself I there will throw;  
I'm quite resolved on that.

*Chica.*— But now attend to me.

*Count.*—Oh, yes, you take the thing just as it ought to be.

*Chica.*—Have you got through now?

*Count.*— Yes.

*Chica.*— Then to my judge I would  
Proceed informally.

*Count.*— This gentleman's so good!

*Chica.*—If you talk all the time, I must preserve my peace.

*Count.*—I'm very much obliged. I feel quite at my ease.

*Chica.*—I'd go and find my judge, and say to him——

*Count.*— Yes——

*Chica.*— Mind me——  
And I would say to him, My lord——

*Count.*— Yes, sir——

*Chica.*— Bind me——

*Count.*—I don't wish to be bound, sir.

*Chica.*— Nothing of the sort.

*Count.*—And I will not be bound.

*Chica.*— Why, now, you're full of sport.

*Count.*—No.

*Chica.*— But, madam, you can't see what I'm driving at.

*Count.*—I must litigate, sir, or never can do that.

*Chica.*—But——

*Count.*— Again I tell you, sir, I will not be bound.

*Chica.*—Now, truly, when a woman's intellect's unsound——

*Count.*—You're mad yourself.

*Chica.*— Madam!

*Count.*— For what should they bind me?

*Chica.*—But, madam——

- Count.*— See the man's familiarity!
- Chica.*—But, madam——
- Count.*— Full of his tricks, this dirty fellow'd pass  
For a wise counsellor!
- Chica.*— Madam!
- Count.*— With his young ass!
- Chica.*—You drive me mad!
- Count.*— Good man, go home and watch your grass.
- Chica.*—You weary me.
- Count.*— The fool!
- Chica.*— No witness near, alas!

## SCENE VIII.

Petit-Jean, Countess, Chicaneau.

- Petit-Jean.*—What a disturbance they are making at our gate.  
Move on, sirs, if you wish to clamor at this rate.
- Chicaneau.*—Sir, I call you to witness——
- Countess.*— This fellow is a fool.
- Chica.*—You hear her, sir; remember this word against all rule.
- Petit-J.*—(To Countess.) T' escape you such expressions you  
ought not to allow.
- Count.*—Indeed! it's right for him to call me mad just now.
- Petit-J.*—(To Chicaneau.) Mad! you say wrong, sir. Why  
thus her feelings wound?
- Chica.*—I only counselled her.
- Petit-J.*— Oh!
- Count.*— Yes, to have me bound!
- Petit-J.*—Oh, sir!
- Chica.*— Why won't the woman hear me to the end?
- Petit-J.*—Oh, madam!
- Count.*— Who? am I to help this man contend?
- Chica.*—A prying woman!
- Petit-J.*— Oh, be still!

- Count.*— Trickster!
- Petit-J.*— Stop, do!
- Chica.*—Who dares no more to litigate?
- Count.*— What's that to you?  
Make what you can of it, forger abominable,  
You thief, you mischief-maker!
- Chica.*— Good, good! oh, the devil!  
Sergeant, ho! a sergeant!
- Count.*— Bailiff! a bailiff here!
- Petit-J.*—In faith, they all need binding—sutors and judge—I  
fear.

## ACT SECOND. SCENE I.

Léandre, L'Intimé.

- L'Intimé.*—Once more—that I should do the whole, it is not fair;  
While I act bailiff, do you play commissioner.  
You've but to follow me, in robe redundant;  
You'll find the means to talk with her abundant.  
Exchange for darker locks your wig of flaxen hair.  
These suitors—will they dream who in the world you  
are?  
Ah, when unto your father they go their court to pay,  
You hardly even know whether it yet is day.  
But this litigious countess do you not admire?—  
To throw whom in my way good fortune did conspire?  
Who, when she thought she saw me taken in the snare,  
To Chicaneau has bid me this writ repair,  
Assigning certain words as grounds of her attack,  
By which he sought to make her out a maniac;  
Mad, I say,—to be bound, and for other violence  
And blasphemies, always of suits the ornaments.  
But you have naught remarked of all my equipage.  
Of a sergeant hav'n't I the face and carriage?

*Léandre.*—Ah, very well!

- L'Int.*— Since morning, violence to suffer,  
I feel in soul and body six times tougher.  
Let come what will, the writ is here, your letter there;

That Isabelle shall have the latter, I will swear.  
 But to get executed this contract which you see,  
 It's needful, close upon my heels you should follow me;  
 Pretending to inquire into all the matter,  
 Under her father's nose make love directly at her.

*Léan.*—But don't make love to father, and the daughter sue.

*L'Int.*—Father shall have the writ, daughter the billet-doux.  
 Let's enter. (Knocks at Isabelle's door.)

## SCENE II.

Isabelle, L'Intimé.

*Isabelle.*—Who knocks?

*L'Intimé.*— A friend. (Aside.) The voice of Isabelle.

*Isa.*—Do you require to see some one, sir?

*L'Int.*— Mad'moiselle,  
 I have for you a trifling process, and I pray,  
 Honor me by taking it in the legal way.

*Isa.*—Excuse me, sir, these matters I don't understand;  
 Father will soon be here, whom you can then command.

*L'Int.*—He's not within then, now, miss?

*Isa.*— No; he's not arrived.

*L'Int.*—The summons, miss, it seems, with your own name's  
 inscribed.

*Isa.*—I have no doubt, sir, you mistake me for another.  
 Without having lawsuits, their cost I can discover;  
 If every one like me detested litigation,  
 The like of you would seek some other occupation.  
 Good-bye.

*L'Int.*— Permit me——

*Isa.*— There's nothing I'll permit you.

*L'Int.*—It's not a summons.

*Isa.*— Nonsense!

*L'Int.*— It's a billet-doux.

*Isa.*—Still less then.

- L'Int.*— But peruse it.  
*Isa.*— You cannot thus cheat me.  
*L'Int.*—From Mr.——  
*Isa.*— Good-bye.  
*L'Int.*— Léandre.  
*Isa.*— Speak in a lower key.  
 This is from Mr. ——?  
*L'Int.*— Deuce take it! I'm quite out of breath.  
 To be heard, one's got to talk himself almost to death!  
*Isa.*—Ah! *L'Intimé*! but please, my 'stonished senses pardon.  
 Give 't here.  
*L'Int.*— But then my nose you'd shut the door quite hard on?  
*Isa.*—Who would have known you, now, disguised in that condition?  
 Give 't me.  
*L'Int.*— Then does your door give honest folks admission?  
*Isa.*—Oh, give it up!  
*L'Int.*— The pest!  
*Isa.*— Well, then, if you think better,  
 You may retrace your footsteps, and retain your letter.  
*L'Int.*—Here 'tis. Another time use more consideration.

## SCENE III.

Chicaneau, Isabelle, *L'Intimé*.

- Chicaneau.*—I'm a fool and a thief then, in her estimation!  
 A sergeant's charged to thank her for the compliment;  
 And a dish of my own cooking has to her been sent.  
 I should be very sorry had this been otherwise,  
 And if with prior summons she should me surprise.  
 How now? Does any man about my daughter hover?  
 See, now, she reads a letter! Ah! 'tis from some lover.  
 Let us approach.  
*Isabelle.*— Shall I believe? Can I suppose  
 Your master is sincere?

*L'Intimé.*— He takes no more repose  
 Than your father; frets himself; he'll (perceiving Chicaneau) this day make it plain,  
 That even if you sue him, you nothing have to gain.  
*Isa.*—(Seeing Chicaneau.) It is my father! (To *L'Intimé.*)  
 Well, sir, you may tell your client,  
 That if he perseveres, he'll find us still defiant.  
 Here now, you may behold, sir, how your writ is used.  
 (Tears the letter.)

*Chica.*—What, then! it was a summons that my girl perused!  
 Some day you'll be the honor of your family,  
 My life, my daughter, you'll defend your property.  
 Come, I will buy for you the code of practice civil.  
 But tearing up law-writs will never do—the devil!

*Isa.*—(To *L'Intimé.*) Assure them, I have little fear of them, in short;

And let them do their worst, they only make me sport.

*Chica.*—Ah! don't get angry.

*Isa.*—(To *L'Intimé.*) Good-bye, sir, to you.

#### SCENE IV.

Chicaneau, *L'Intimé.*

*L'Intimé.*—(Taking a position to write.) Now come.  
 Let's have the facts.

*Chicaneau.*— Pray pardon her. How business 's done,  
 She has not been instructed. Besides, sir, if you please,  
 Behold! I can the pieces together put with ease.

*L'Int.*—No.

*Chica.*— I can read it well.

*L'Int.*— It's of no consequence,  
 I have a copy with me.

*Chica.*— Ah! that countenance  
 Impresses me—but strangely, the longer I reflect  
 Upon your face, it seems to me the less I recollect.  
 I know so many bailiffs.

*L'Int.*— About me, sir, inquire.  
In my small way I well discharge what you require.

*Chica.*—May be. Whom do you represent?

*L'Int.*— A lady, sir, of rank,  
Who greatly reverences you, and from her soul would  
thank

You, if you'd condescend to answer my citation,  
And give her but a single word of reparation.

*Chica.*—Of reparation? Surely, I've done no one harm.

*L'Int.*—I can believe you, sir. You have a heart too warm.

*Chica.*—What then do you require?

*L'Int.*— She wishes, sir, that you,  
Before some witnesses, would her the honor do  
T' avow that she's quite sane, and not demented.

*Chica.*—My countess!

*L'Int.*— To remain your servant she's contented.

*Chica.*—I'm hers, to be commanded.

*L'Int.*— The proffer, sir,  
Is kind.

*Chica.*— Yes, please assure her that an officer  
From me shall bear to her all for which she contends.  
What now! The beaten, on my faith, must make amends!  
Let's see what she says here: "Sixth of January,  
For having falsely said it was necessary—  
Being thereto induced by the spirit of chicane—  
To bind that high and mighty dame, Yolande Cudasne,  
Countess of Pimbesche and Orbesche, and so forth.  
It's ordered that immediately he go forth,  
Unto the lady's lodgings, and there in clear voice, he—  
In presence of four witnesses and a notary—"—  
Oh pshaw!—"said Hierome shall openly admit  
That he esteems her sound in mind, and of good wit.  
LE BON." This of your seigniorship is then the title?

*L'Int.*—The same, to serve you, sir. (Aside.) To brass it out  
is vital.

*Chica.*—Le Bon! Writs signed that way have never been in  
vogue.

Mr. Le Bon—



*L'Int.*—

Well, sir.

*Chica.*—

I think you are a rogue.

*L'Int.*—I beg your pardon, sir, I am an honest man.

*Chica.*—But the most arrant knave from Rome to Caen.

*L'Int.*—Well, sir, 'tis not for me your notion to gainsay,

But you'll have the pleasure roundly for this to pay.

*Chica.*—I pay? In blows.

*L'Int.*—

You're too polite such pains to take.

But you shall pay me well.

*Chica.*—

You cause my head to ache.

Take that—that is your pay. (Striking him.)

*L'Int.*—

A blow! Let's write it down:

"After a great resistance, aforesaid Hierome

Did strike, to wit, did hit, my sergeant on the chop,

With the said blow causing his hat in the mud to drop."

*Chica.*—Add that. (Kicking him.)

*L'Int.*—

Good! The damages seem to accumulate.

I need this very much. "With this not satiate,

Aforesaid blows reiterated with a kick."

Courage! "More beside: aforesaid, in passion quick,

The present written statement tried to lacerate."

Come, that's not bad, dear sir. Why do you hesitate?

Don't give it up so soon.

*Chica.*—

You rogue!

*L'Int.*—

And, if it please ye,

A few blows with a stick will make my income easy.

*Chica.*—(Threatening him with a stick.) Indeed! I'll see if  
he's a sergeant true.

*L'Int.*—(In position to write.)

So, sir,

Strike on. I have four children to support.

*Chica.*—

Oh, sir,

Your pardon; for a sergeant you I'd never take;

But his wit sometimes the cleverest will forsake.

I'll make apology for this surmise outrageous.

Yes, you are sergeant, sir, and sergeant most courageous.

Your hand; the like of you are such as I revere;

And I was educated always in the fear  
Of God and of the sergeants, by my father late.

*L'Int.*—No; one can't flog people at such a trifling rate.

*Chica.*—Oh, sir, spare me the law.

*L'Int.*— Your servant. Contumacious,  
A cudgel raised, a cuff, a kick, ah ha!

*Chica.*— Oh, gracious!  
Pray pay me off in kind.

*L'Int.*— That they were dealt suffices.  
They're worth to me a thousand crowns, by last advices.

## SCENE V.

Léandre, in a commissioner's gown; Chicaneau, L'Intimé.

*L'Intimé.*—Here in the nick of time comes the commissioner.  
Oh, sir, your presence here is very necessary.  
This man, as you may see, of a most violent  
Buffet in the face made me a little present.

*Léandre.*—To you, sir?

*L'Intimé.*— Yes, to me, speaking in proper person.  
Item, a kick. Likewise, some names, to my aversion.

*Léan.*—Have you some evidence of this?

*L'Int.*— Why, sir, just feel it;  
My cheek, still burning with the blow, will sure reveal it.

*Léan.*—A criminal affair; and in the act detected.

*Chicaneau.*—Woe's me!

*L'Int.*— His daughter, too—at least, one so suspected—  
Has torn one of my papers all to bits, declaring  
I gave her satisfaction, and with scornful bearing  
She offers us defiance.

*Léan.*—(To L'Intimé.) Cause her to come to me.  
A contumacious spirit reigns in this family.

*Chica.*—(Aside.) It's absolutely certain that I am bewitched.  
If I know any of them, let my neck be stretched.

*Léan.*—What! strike an officer! But here's the rogue inhuman.

## SCENE VI.

Isabelle, Léandre, Chicaneau, L'Intimé.

*L'Intimé.*—(To Isabelle.) Do you not recognize him?

*Léandre.*— Very well, young woman.  
It's you, then, who have braved our man so naughtily,  
And who have dared defy our power so haughtily?  
Your name, now?

*Isabelle.*— Isabelle.

*Léan.*— Your age, young lady?

*Isa.*—Eighteen.

*Chicaneau.*— I think she is a little on the shady  
Side—no matter.

*Léan.*— And are you with a mate provided?

*Isa.*—No, sir.

*Léan.*— You seem to smile. Set down that she derided.  
(To L'Intimé.)

*Chica.*—Of husbands, sir, to daughters don't you chatter;  
You see, such secrets are a family matter.

*Léan.*—Put down, he interrupts.

*Chica.*— Of that I never thought.  
My daughter, take good care to answer as you ought.

*Léan.*—Oh, don't be discomposed, but answer at your leisure;  
There's naught we wish to do that can give you displeas-  
ure.

Have you not just received from this officer in sight  
A certain paper writing?

*Isa.*— Certainly, sir.

*Chica.*— That's right.

*Léan.*—Well, did you tear this paper without perusal?

*Isa.*—I did peruse it, please you.

*Chica.*— Good!

*Léan.*—(To L'Intimé.) Write as usual.

Why then did you destroy it? (To Isabelle.)

*Isa.*— Because I was afraid

To lay th' affair to heart my father would be made,  
And that by reading it he'd greatly be annoyed.

*Chica.*—This is pure naughtiness. Thus process you'd avoid?

*Léan.*—You did not, then, destroy it out of willfulness?

Or in contempt of those who in it you address?

*Isa.*—For them I neither scorn nor anger entertain.

*Léan.*—(To L'Intimé.) Write that.

*Chica.*— That she is like her father, sir, is plain.  
She answers very well, sir.

*Léan.*— Yet, you still exhibit  
'Gainst those who wear the gown an evident bad spirit.

*Isa.*—To me the robe has hitherto been an aversion,

But now I rapidly experience a conversion.

*Chica.*—Poor child! Come, come, as soon as it is in my power,  
I'll mate you well, provided I escape the dower.

*Léan.*—You anxiously desire that justice be appeased?

*Isa.*—I'd rather anything than to have you displeased.

*L'Int.*—Sign, sir.

*Léan.*— I trust, at least, where'er we have it,  
You will corroborate your affidavit?

*Isa.*—Rest assured, sir, Isabelle by her word will stand.

*Léan.*—Sign, then. That's well. Justice can nothing more demand.

Come, don't you also sign, sir? (To Chicaneau.)

*Chica.*— Oh, yes, most willingly.  
I subscribe what she has said, unhesitatingly.

*Léan.*—(In a low tone, to Isabelle.) Everything goes bravely  
on, and, as I designed,

A legal contract, written in due form, he's signed,  
And he will be condemned by his own signature.

*Chica.*—He's taken with her wit. What's he saying to her?

*Léan.*—Discreet as you are beautiful remain, and you  
Will find all well. Bailiff, conduct her home. Adieu!  
And you, sir, march yourself. (To Chicaneau.)

*Chica.*— Where, sir?

*Léan.*— Just follow me.

*Chica.*—Whither?

*Léan.*— You'll find. Come, in the name of majesty.

*Chica.*—How now!

#### SCENE VII.

Léandre, Chicaneau, Petit-Jean.

*Petit-Jean.*— Has no one seen my master there?—hallo!  
Which way did he go out? By the door or window?

*Léandre.*—What next?

*Petit-J.*— I cannot tell what's happened to his son;  
The father's gone where destined by the evil one.  
For spices—perquisites—incessantly he howled,  
And, unsuspecting, I about the kitchen prowled  
To find the pepper-bottle, and behind my back  
He's disappeared.

#### SCENE VIII.

Dandin, at a dormer window; Léandre, Chicaneau, L'Intimé,  
Petit-Jean.

*Dandin.*— Peace, peace! Why don't they stop that clack?

*Léandre.*—Oh, gracious heav'n!

*Petit-Jean.*— Look there! my faith! he's on the roof.

*Dand.*—What folks are you down there? And what is your be-  
hoof?

And who are you in gowns?—lawyers, or I'm in error.  
Come, speak.

*Petit-J.*— You'll find that to the cats he'll carry terror.

*Dand.*—To see my secretary did you take precaution?  
Go first and ask him if I understand your motion.

*Léan.*—That I should force him from that place is urgent.  
Keep a sharp lookout on your prisoner, sergeant.

*Petit-J.*—O! ho!

*Léan.*— Keep still and follow me.

## SCENE IX.

Countess, Dandin, Chicaneau, L'Intimé.

*Dandin.*— Now quick, state **your petition.**

*Chicaneau.*—Sir, without your warrant they took me prisoner.

*Countess.*—Good heav'n! In the cock-loft I perceive his honor!  
What is he doing there?

*L'Intimé.*— He's holding audience.

The field is clear for you.

*Chica.*— They do me violence,  
Your honor—injure me, and therefore I come here  
To enter my complaint.

*Count.*— To make complaint I appear.

*Chica. and Count.*—My adversary, sir, you see before you  
placed.

*L'Int.*—Zounds! In this inquiry I wish to be embraced.

*Chica., Count., L'Int.*—My lord, I come before you on a trifling  
matter.

*Chica.*—Now, sirs, to state our rights one at a time is better.

*Count.*—His rights! All that he states is nothing but deception.

*Dand.*—What have they done?

*Chica., Count., L'Int.*— He's slandered me beyond conception.

*L'Int.*—Besides a blow, your honor, which makes me most  
abused.

*Chica.*—Your honor, I am cousin to one of your nephews.

*Count.*—By Father Cordon, sir, my action will be stated.

*L'Int.*—To your apothecary, sir, I am related.

*Dand.*—Your titles?

*Count.*— I am countess.

*L'Int.*— Bailiff.

*Chica.*— I'm citizen.

Gentlemen——

*Dand.*—(Retiring from the window.) Proceed; I'll hear all three  
together, then.

*Chica.*—Gentlemen——

*L'Int.*— See there, he's off! Our chance diminishes.

*Count.*—Alas!

*Chica.*— Ah, what! Is it thus the session finishes?  
I haven't had a chance two words yet to disclose.

# SCENE X.

Léandre, without his gown; Chicaneau, Countess, L'Intimé.

*Léandre.*—Gentlemen, be good enough to leave us in repose.

*Chicaneau.*—Can any one come in, sir?

*Léan.*— Not till I die first.

*Chica.*—Alas! But why? In one small hour, or two at worst,  
I'd finish.

*Léan.*— But I say, we can't receive a caller.

*Countess.*—It's well to shut the door against that brawler.  
But I——

*Léan.*— No one can enter, I assure you still.

*Count.*—Oh, sir, but I will enter.

*Léan.*— Perhaps.

*Count.*— I'm sure I will.

*Léan.*—How? through the window?

*Count.*— The door.

*Léan.*— That's to be tried.

*Chica.*—Although until this evening I remain outside——

# SCENE XI.

Léandre, Chicaneau, Countess, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

*Petit-Jean.*—(To Léandre.) No matter what we do, they do not  
seem to mind.

Zounds! in our lower room I have the judge confined,  
Quite near the cellar.



- Léandre.*— Now then, once and forever,  
 Father shall not be seen.
- Chicaneau.*— Ah, well! If, however,  
 It is necessary that I should see him more——  
 (*Dandin appears at an air-hole.*)  
 What do I see? 'Tis he whom heaven doth restore!
- Léan.*—What! At the air-hole?
- Petit-J.*— He's possessed, beyond a doubt.
- Chica.*—Sir——
- Dandin.*— Impertinent! But for you I should be out.
- Chica.*—Your honor——
- Dand.*— You're a fool. Go, get you back.
- Chica.*—My lord, will you not be so good——
- Dand.*— My head you'll crack.
- Chica.*—Sir, I have directed——
- Dand.*— Keep still, you are commanded.
- Chica.*—There should be sent to you——
- Dand.*— To jail he is remanded.
- Chica.*—Some quarter casks of wine.
- Dand.*— But I'll never listen to't.
- Chica.*—It is the best of muscat.
- Dand.*— Explain again your suit.
- Léan.*—(To *L'Intimé.*) We must surround them on all sides,  
 with celerity.
- Countess.*—That which he speaks is full, sir, of insincerity.
- Chica.*—Oh, sir, I speak the truth.
- Dand.*— Now let her tell her tale.
- Count.*—Hear me, your honor.
- Dand.*— Oh, my breath begins to fail.
- Chica.*—My lord——
- Dand.*— You stifle me.
- Count.*— Then hither turn your eye.
- Dand.*—She stifles me. Oh, oh!
- Chica.*— You're dragging me; oh, my!  
 Take care, I'm falling!

*Petit-J.*— There they go, upon my word,  
Down in the cellar, all!

*Léan.*— Fly! quick as any bird;  
Hasten to their relief. But I at least suggest,  
That Mr. Chicaneau, since he's down there, would best  
Remain there all the day. See to it, L'Intimé.

*L'Intimé.*—You watch the air-hole, then.

*Léan.*— I will. Quick now! I say.

## SCENE XII.

Countess, Léandre.

*Countess.*—The wretch! He would his honor's judgment prejudice.

(Through the air-hole.) Don't you believe him, sir,  
when he alleges this.

He's not a single witness. He's only lying.

*Léan.*—What are you telling them? Perhaps they're dying.

*Count.*—Oh, sir, he'll make him credit anything he'll choose.  
Oh, let me enter.

*Léan.*— No, ma'am, that I must refuse.

*Count.*—The present of that wine, 'tis easily detected,  
The judgment of the son and father has infected.  
Patience! As may be needful I'll protest, and ask  
Relief against his lordship and the quarter cask.

*Léan.*—Go then, and cease to give us so much worriment.  
What maniacs! I've never seen such merriment.

## SCENE XIII.

Dandin, Léandre, L'Intimé.

*L'Intimé.*—My lord, where are you going? Of danger you make  
sport,

And yet you're limping badly.

*Dandin.*— I'm going to hold court.

*Léandre.*—Father, how now? To dress your wounds give us permission.

A surgeon call.

*Dand.*— He may attend me at the session.

*Léan.*—But oh! my father, stay——

*Dand.*— Oh, I can see through you;  
That which suits your purpose you think to make me do.  
You seem to have neither love nor reverence for me.  
I'm not permitted now to render a decree.  
Complete your work, then. Quickly take this bag.

*Léan.*— Go easy,  
My father. Here's a chance to compromise, an 't please ye.

If without holding court existence is but anguish,  
If to render justice continually you languish,  
Still, 'tis unnecessary far abroad to roam,  
But exercise your talents in a court at home.

*Dand.*—You should not satirize the magistrates severely.  
I wish to be a judge not in appearance merely.

*Léan.*—On the other hand, you shall be judge without appeal,  
With jurisdiction civil and criminal as well.  
And every day two sessions you can hold with ease;  
At home do nothing else but render your decrees.  
A servant fails to give a tumbler a good washing—  
Condemn him to a fine; if broken, to a thrashing.

*Dand.*—In this there's something, surely. Your reasoning's exquisite.

But then, again—will any pay me my perquisite?

*Léan.*—You can detain their wages as security.

*Dand.*—It seems to me he's talking very sensibly.

*Léan.*—Against one of your neighbors——

#### SCENE XIV.

Dandin, Léandre, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

*Petit-Jean.*— Stop! Stop him! Catch him, do!

*Léandre.*—(To L'Intimé.) Ah, 'tis my prisoner, without doubt,  
who's escaped from you.

*L'Intimé.*—No, no, fear nothing.

*Petit-J.*— All is lost. Your dog, Citron,  
Has been and of our capon left nothing but the bone.  
Nothing is safe before him. Whate'er he finds he takes.

*Léan.*—Now, father, here's a case for you. But mercy sakes!  
Put yourselves after him! Run, all!

*Dandin.*— Not so much clatter—  
Softly; an apprehension private suits this matter.

*Léan.*—Father, make an example worthy of belief;  
Punish with severity this domestic thief.

*Dand.*—But I wish to try the case with due formality;  
Counsel should be assigned, for impartiality;  
But we have none.

*Léan.*— Ah, well, it self-defense is  
T' appoint your porter and amanuensis.  
I think you'll make of each an excellent advocate—  
They are quite ignorant.

*L'Int.*— How wrong! for with a state  
Of drowsiness I can a judge as soon infect  
As any one.

*Petit-J.*— As I know naught, nothing expect.

*Léan.*—This being your first case, it shall be well prepared.

*Petit-J.*—But I can't read at all.

*Léan.*— A prompter 'll give the word.

*Dand.*—Now let us go prepare. And, gentlemen, no chicane;  
We close our eyes to bribes, to our ears intrigue is vain.  
Master Little-John the complainant represents;  
You, Master L'Intimé, appear for the defense.

### ACT THIRD. SCENE I.

Chicaneau, Léandre, Prompter.

*Chicaneau.*—Yes, this is the way, sir, they manage each affair;  
I know not either bailliff nor commissioner.  
Every word I tell you's true.

*Léandre.*— I believe it all;  
 But if you'll credit me, you'd better let it fall.  
 It is in vain to think of prosecuting both;  
 To trouble your repose as well as theirs you're loth.  
 Already you have spent three-fourths of your estate,  
 Bags heaped on one another with papers to inflate;  
 And all in this pursuit against your interest.

*Chica.*—That your advice is good is certainly confessed,  
 And I intend ere long your counsel to pursue,  
 But first, with intercession try what I can do.  
 Soon as his honor Dandin gives an audience,  
 I will bring my daughter with greatest diligence.  
 She's very truthful; let them interrogate her;  
 And even than myself she will answer better.

*Léan.*—Go, and return again. You shall have justice done.

*Prompter.*—Oh, what a man!

*Léan.*— I use a strange deception,  
 But father is a man driven to desperation;  
 We'll amuse him with a case in imagination.  
 I have another wish, and that's for condemnation  
 Of this mad fool who brings all into litigation.  
 But look you, close upon our heels come in our mates.

## SCENE II.

Dandin, Léandre; L'Intimé and Petit-Jean in gowns; the  
 Prompter.

*Dandin.*—Come, who are you down there?

*Léandre.*— These are the advocates.

*Dand.*—(To the Prompter.) And you?

*Prompter.*— I come to help their halting memory.

*Dand.*—I understand. And you?

*Léan.*— I'm the auditory.

*Dand.*—Commence then.

*Prom.*— Gentlemen——

*Petit-Jean.*— Oh take a lower key,

For if you prompt so loud they never can hear me.  
My lord——

*Dand.*— Put on your hat.

*Petit-J.*— Oh, sir——

*Dand.*— I say put on your hat.

*Petit-J.*—Oh, sir, I think I understand good breeding better'n that.

*Dand.*—Then don't put on your hat.

*Petit-J.*—(Putting on his hat, to Prompter.) Well, Prompter, now be dumb;

That which I know the best is my exordium.  
Your honors, when I consider with exactitude  
The world's inconstancy, full of vicissitude;  
When I behold so many races different,  
So many wandering stars, not one star permanent;  
When I view Cæsar and consider his fortune;  
When I behold the sun, when I behold the moon;  
When I behold the state of the Babylonians,  
Transferred from Persia to the Macedonians;  
When I behold the Lorraines, at first despotical,  
Pass to a democracy, then grow monarchical;  
When I behold Japan——

*L'Intimé.*— When will he stop beholding?

*Petit-J.*—Oh dear! why will he interrupt me with his scolding?  
I cannot speak a word.

*Dand.*— Restive attorney,  
Why don't you let him finish up his journey?  
When I'm a-sweat to learn if he 'n Japan discover  
A harbor for his capon, and thus his wandering's over,  
You've interrupted him with your discourse absurd.  
Now, advocate, proceed.

*Petit-J.*— I can't. I've lost the word.

*Léan.*—Out with it, Little-John. Your *début* none derides.  
But why d'ye keep your arms stuck close against your  
sides?  
And stand upon your feet like a statue perpendicular?  
Come, brighten up, don't be afraid, we're not particular.

*Petit-J.*—(Moving his arms.) When—I behold—when—I behold—

*Léan.*—

Well, what? you dunce?

*Petit-J.*—Why, how can one expect to course two hares at once?

*Prom.*—'Tis said—

*Petit-J.*— 'Tis said—

*Prom.*— In the—

*Petit-J.*— In the—

*Prom.*— Metamorphosis—

*Petit-J.*—What say?

*Prom.*— That the metem—

*Petit-J.*— That the metem—

*Prom.*— Sychosis—

*Petit-J.*—Sychosis—

*Prom.*— Oh dear! The horse—

*Petit-J.*— The horse—

*Prom.*— Again said!

*Petit-J.*—Again—

*Prom.*— The dog—

*Petit-J.*— The dog—

*Prom.*— Oh blockhead!

*Petit-J.*— The blockhead—

*Prom.*—Plague take this advocate!

*Petit-J.*— The plague on you be cast!

See t'other fellow, too, with 's face like Lenten fast!

Go to the devil, all!

*Dand.*— Come, on to business push.

*Petit-J.*—Oh dear me! what's the use of beating round the bush?

They teach me to speak words in length a fathom each,  
Big-sounding words that would from here to Pontoise reach.

Now, I don't see the sense of all this hurly-burly;

In short, to find a fowl I came this morning early;

There's naught your dog won't steal, if it but take the shape on



Of fowl; and now he's gone and gobbled up our capon—  
 A capon from the Maine; here's nothing to decide;  
 The first time that I catch him, I'll soundly tan his hide.

*Léan.*—A very neat conclusion, worthy of your setting out!

*Petit-J.*—Oh, carp who will. One knows my meaning without doubt.

*Dand.*—Produce your witnesses.

*Léan.*— Well said, if he's got any.

They don't come for the wish; they cost a deal of money.

*Petit-J.*—We have a plenty, though, and they're beyond reproach.

*Dand.*—Let them present themselves.

*Petit-J.*— I have them in my pouch.

Behold them! here they are—the capon's legs and head!  
 Examine them and judge.

*L'Int.*— I object to them.

*Dand.*— Well said!

But why object?

*L'Int.*— They're from the Maine; their trade's to cozen.

*Dand.*—True, these Maine witnesses crowd in here by the dozen.

*L'Int.*—Your honor——

*Dand.*— Tell me, sir, shall you be expeditious?

*L'Int.*—I cannot answer anything.

*Dand.*— Why, that's judicious.

*L'Int.*—(In a tone ending in a squeal.) My lords, all that can  
 astound the culpable,

All that which mortals hold the most redoubtable,

Against us here assembled, seems to be in league;

In short, I mean to say, eloquence and intrigue.

The fame of the deceased on one hand stands t' admonish,

On t'other, eloquence doth equally astonish—

The shining eloquence of Master Little-John.

*Dand.*—Say, can't you soften down the shrillness of your tone?

*L'Int.*—(In his ordinary voice.) Oh, yes; I've many of them.

(In a pompous tone.) Whatever diffidence

May justly be aroused by said fame and eloquence,

We rest upon your truth as hope leans on the anchor,  
 And trust your sense of right to mitigate all rancor.  
 Before the great Dandin innocence is power;  
 Yes, before the Cato of Normandy the Lower,  
 That sun of equity whose beams have never languished.  
 Vict'ry delights the gods; but Cato's for the vanquished.

*Dand.*—Now, truly, he pleads well.

*L'Int.*— To make no further pause,  
 I take my cue, and go to the merits of my cause.  
 Aristotle wisely says, in his Politikon——

*Dand.*—Why, advocate, the point is now about a capon,  
 And not of Aristotle's views political.

*L'Int.*—But the authorities Peripatetical  
 Have proved that good and evil——

*Dand.*— In courts of equity  
 Your Aristotle hasn't the least authority.  
 Come, to the point.

*L'Int.*— Pausanias, in his Corinthiacs——

*Dand.*—To the point.

*L'Int.*— Rebuffe——

*Dand.*— To the point, I tell you.

*L'Int.*— The great Jacques——

*Dand.*—The point, the point, the point!

*L'Int.*— Harmenopul, in fact——

*Dand.*—I'll render judgment now.

*L'Int.*— Oh dear, how rash you act.  
 Then have the facts. (Quickly.) This dog, to the kitchen  
 drawing nigh,  
 A capon plump and sweet within he did espy;  
 Now, he for whom I speak with hunger there was hast-  
 ing;  
 He against whom I speak was nicely plucked and bast-  
 ing;  
 Then he for whom I speak seized on, took off, secreted  
 Him against whom I speak. The iarder thus depleted,  
 He's taken on a writ. Counsel plead pro and con;  
 A day's fixed. I'm to speak, I speak, and now I've done.

*Dand.*—Tut, tut, tut, tut! Learn better how to try your case.  
Th' irrelevant you give at a deliberate pace,  
Th' important you run over at a gallop strong.

*L'Int.*—The former, may it please you, sir, is fine.

*Dand.*—It's wrong.  
Were causes ever known to be in this way pleaded?  
What say th' assembly?

*Léan.*—This style is now most heeded.

*L'Int.*—(In a vehement tone.) Where were we, gentlemen?  
They come. And how come?

They chase my client, and they force a mansion.  
What mansion? Why the mansion of our own judge.  
They force the cellar which serves us for refuge.  
Of brigandage they then accuse us, and of theft;  
We're then dragged headlong forth, and to our accusers  
left,

To Master Little-John, your honor—I attest.  
Who does not know the law, If any Dog (Digest  
De vi, and see the paragraph Caponibus),  
Is manifestly contrary to such abuse?  
And when it turned out true that my poor client Citron  
Had eaten all or most of the aforesaid capon,  
Against this trifling deed you will not hesitate  
To weigh our former actions, and let them mitigate.  
When has my client ever been reprimanded?  
By whom has this your house always been defended?  
When have we failed to bark at robbers in our town?  
Witness three low attorneys, from whom we've torn the  
gown.

They show you certain fragments to accuse us by;  
Receive these other fragments to help us justify.

*Petit-J.*—But Adam——

*L'Int.*—You keep still.

*Petit-J.*—L'Intimé——

*L'Int.*—You're too rude.

*Petit-J.*—He's hoarse!

*L'Int.*—Shut up!

*Dand.*—Repose a moment, then conclude.

*L'Int.*—(In a wheezing voice.) Since, then, a moment's rest to  
 catch our breath 's permitted,  
 And formal peroration 's to be intermitted,  
 I come, without omission or prevarication,  
 Compendiously t' enunciate an explication,  
 And hold up to your eyes a general exposition  
 Of all my cause, and all my client's imposition.

*Dand.*—T' repeat the same thing twenty times, he prefers by  
 far,  
 Than once t' abridge. Oh, man, or whatever else you are,  
 Devil, conclude; or heav'n seize thee with damnation!

*L'Int.*—I finish now.

*Dand.*— Oh!

*L'Int.*— Before the world's creation—

*Dand.*—Oh, skip over to the flood!

*L'Int.*— Well, then, before the birth  
 Of time, of the material system, and of earth—  
 The world, the universe, and nature universal,  
 Lay buried in the bosom of the material.  
 The elements—the fire, the earth, the air, the water—  
 Piled up or buried, are naught but heaps of matter,  
 A dire confusion, a mass of matter formless,  
 Chaos, disorder, and brooding rout enormous.  
 As Ovid sings, there was, on all the face of nature—  
 Called chaos by the Greeks—one rude indefinite feature.  
 (Dandin, being sleepy, nods and falls heavily.)

*Léan.*—My father, what a tumble!

*Petit-J.*— See how he drops his head!

*Léan.*—Come, father, rouse yourself!

*Petit-J.*— Your honor, are you dead?

*Léan.*—Father! I say.

*Dand.*— Well, well? what? who? a man, it seems.  
 Truly, I've been asleep, and had quite pleasant dreams.

*Léan.*—Come, sir, decide.

*Dand.*— To the galleys!

*Léan.*— You hardly can, sir,  
 Punish a dog that way.

*Dand.*— No more—you have my answer.  
What with the world and chaos, I've such a muddled  
pate!

Wind up this cause.

*L'Int.*—(Presenting the puppies to him.) Come hither, you  
family desolate;

Come, little ones, whom he would orphans render,  
Give utterance to your understandings tender.

Yes, gentlemen, you here behold our misery;

Restore a father to his orphan'd family;

Our father dear, by whom we were engender'd—

Our father dear——

*Dand.*— This issue can't be tender'd.

*L'Int.*—Our father, gentlemen——

*Dand.*— Don't keep up such discord.

They're making a great muss——

*L'Int.*— Behold our tears, my lord!

*Dand.*—Why, now, I seem to be quite taken with compassion;

Oh, what a thing to touch the feelings in this fashion!

I am quite bothered here. The fact alleged so presses;

A crime 's averred; th' accused himself confesses.

But if he is condemned, equal 's th' embarrassment.

For then these pretty children must be to th' asylum sent.

But I can't see a person. I am occupied.

### SCENE III.

*Dandin, Léandre, Chicaneau, Isabelle, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.*

*Chicaneau.*—Sir——

*Dandin.*— Court for you is open, and for none beside.

Adieu—but who is that young lady going thither?

*Chica.*—That is my daughter, sir.

*Dand.*— Quick! go and call her hither.

*Isabelle.*—But you are occupied.

*Dand.*— I've nothing to do more.

(To Chicaneau.) If she's your child, sir, why not tell me  
so before?

*Chica.*—My lord——

*Dand.*— Better than you she knows where merit lies.  
 Say—but she's pretty, and then what tender eyes!  
 But that's not all, my child; prudence is required.  
 To see such youthfulness I am with joy inspired.  
 D'ye know that I was formerly a gay young beau?  
 We have been talked about.

*Isa.*— You must have been, I know.

*Dand.*—Tell us, whom would you like to cause to lose his action?

*Isa.*—No one.

*Dand.*— But speak. You can imagine no exaction  
 I'd not perform.

*Isa.*— You oblige me, sir, too much, in fact.

*Dand.*—Have you, for instance, never seen a person racked?

*Isa.*—No, and believe I never would for my salvation.

*Dand.*—I wish you'd gratify for this your inclination.

*Isa.*—Oh, when th' unhappy suffer, can any one stand by?

*Dand.*—Why, to fill an hour or two it answers passably.

*Chica.*—Sir, I've come here to say to you——

*Léandre.*— Now, in a word,  
 Sir, I'll explain to you the whole affair you've heard.  
 It is about a marriage. And to begin, 'tis due  
 To tell you all's arranged, and now depends on you.  
 The lady wishes it; the lover, too, is sighing;  
 And what the lady wishes, the father is desiring.  
 It is for you to judge.

*Dand.*— Marry at once, I say;  
 To-morrow, if you wish it; if need be, to-day.

*Léan.*—Your father in the law, miss; come hither, this is he.  
 Salute him.

*Chica.*— How is this?

*Dand.*— What is the mystery?

*Léan.*—That which you have said, perform, and not undo it.

*Dand.*—Since, then, I have decided, I'll not review it.

*Chica.*—Young ladies are not given without their own consent.

*Léan.*—Doubtless; to charming Isabelle to leave it I'm content.

*Chica.*—Art thou then silent? Come, now, speak; it is for thee  
To speak.

*Isa.*— I dare not, father, appeal from the decree.

*Chica.*—But I appeal myself.

*Léan.*—(Showing him a paper.) Behold this writing. You're  
Not going to appeal from your own signature?

*Chica.*—What's this?

*Dand.*— It is a contract that cannot be impeached.

*Chica.*—But I will be revenged. I have been overreached.

Of more than twenty lawsuits this will be the source.

He's got the daughter — well! He shall not have the  
purse.

*Léan.*—Oh, sir, who says we looked for money when we sought  
her?

Keep your goods and welcome, but leave to us your  
daughter.

*Chica.*—Ah!

*Léan.*— Sir, are you pleased with the session's termination?

*Dand.*—Indeed I am. But give me scope for litigation,  
And pass the rest of life with you I would as lief.  
But let the barristers in future be more brief.  
And now our criminal?

*Léan.*— Let all in joy be merged.

Pardon, father, pardon.

*Dand.*— Well, let him be discharged.

Daughter-in-law, I do this only for your sake.  
In view of other trials, let us respite take.



THE  
PHILOSOPHER DUPED BY LOVE  
(LE PHILOSOPHE DUPÉ DE L'AMOUR)

PLAYED AT  
THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE THEATRE, PARIS,  
BY THE

ITALIAN COMEDIANS  
IN ORDINARY TO THE KING.

*(Translated by W. H. H. Chambers.)*

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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DOCTOR PANTALOGUE, *a Philosopher.*

MIRTO, *his Wife.*

URGANTIA, *an old maid Astrologer.*

LUCINDA, *pupil of Pantalogue.*

CELIO, *disciple of Pantalogue.*

HARLEQUIN, *Celio's Servant.*

SCENE—THE SQUARE AT PADUA IN FRONT  
OF THE HOUSES OF PANTALOGUE AND  
URGANTIA.

## The Philosopher Duped by Love.

### ARGUMENT.

The philosopher, Dr. Pantalogue, has received from a dying Frenchman his daughter Lucinda as a ward, and has lodged her in strict seclusion at the house of the astrologer Urgantia, a homely old maid. The doctor is raising Lucinda in a precise scientific manner, and by his precepts and the philosophical education he is giving her, believes he has effectually destroyed all womanly weakness or inclination to love; in reality, he has fallen in love with her himself. Mirto, the doctor's wife, suspects this and begs Celio, a handsome young disciple, to seek Lucinda out and endeavor to supplant the doctor in her affections. Pantalogue overhears his wife's request and asks Urgantia to impersonate Lucinda.

Celio and Harlequin meet Urgantia and beg her to grant them an interview with Lucinda, but when told that she herself is Lucinda the former retires in disgust. Urgantia has taken a fancy to Celio and is resolved to bestow her love upon him; so, after making the stars promise all manner of good things to Harlequin, she gives him a love-letter for his master. Meanwhile, the

real Lucinda, in whom the instinct of womanhood has been awakened by a love passage between two birds and by a mirroring brook, comes on the scene and tells Harlequin she is Lucinda. He, believing her to be a witch, is frightened at the sudden metamorphosis and expresses wonder. She, scenting a trick, allows him to believe the two Lucindas are one and sends also a message to his master. These messages and the two Lucindas, together with the darkness, lead to some amusing mistakes. Finally Lucinda resolves to forego philosophy to marry Celio. The doctor and Urgantia are discomfited, and the comedy closes with an invitation by Harlequin to applaud, after the Roman fashion.

Enter the doctor and Mirto.

*Doctor.*—What a noise! what an infernal racket! silence, for heaven's sake, silence, wife.

*Mirto.*—What! I keep silence? Perhaps you think I can be made to do so. That's for women to do who have something to reproach themselves with, but I, whose fidelity is so well known, I have the right to——

*Doc.*—Deafen everybody with that infernal tongue!

*Mir.*—And why shouldn't I speak? Have I been untrue to you?

*Doc.*—(Aside.) And who the devil would wish to be the other half?

*Mir.*—I fear no one; honor is a precious jewel I have always carefully preserved, but I do not wish to be the only faithful one, Pantalogue; and the same tie that exacts faithfulness from me demands it of you.

*Doc.*—Well, what are you complaining about now?

*Mir.*—Would you dare to say to my face that you are not in love with Lucinda?

*Doc.*—The thesis is not so difficult to uphold: I am a philosopher, and, moreover, your husband; Mirto, here's a perfect demonstration that I am not Lucinda's lover.

*Mir.*—Oh, drop those big words; this isn't a question of thesis or demonstrations; this concerns a young girl, and pretty, to boot, to whom I mean to keep you from demonstrating too much. Just answer me one thing: Isn't it true that since Lucinda's father, when dying, confided his daughter to you, you have taken particular care of her?

*Doc.*—I admit it.

*Mir.*—And these books from which I cannot tear you away, you leave cheerfully to entertain her?

*Doc.*—Well, what of it?

*Mir.*—She's young?

*Doc.*—Not quite fifteen.

*Mir.*—Very pretty?

*Doc.*—Yes, very.

*Mir.*—Oh, when one wishes to philosophize only, he don't seek such pretty pupils, and what need has she of all your old philosophers, anyway? The sweet, young thing!

*Doc.*—What epithets is your jealousy going to waste so prodigally? Far from feeling for Lucinda the feebleness you suspect, I have endeavored simply to justify the confidence the father of this young lady reposed in me. An affair of honor compelled him to leave his native land, France, and to take refuge in Italy. It was his dying wish that I should undertake the education of his daughter. I lead her each day in the paths of wisdom. I furnish for her heart the antidote to love; I form her manners decorously; in a word, I undertake to make of her a woman strong—

*Mir.*—Say feeble, sir; feeble, of course, for you alone. If you wished nothing else than to give her a taste of wisdom, why should you place her elsewhere than in my home? Why put her with that pretended astrologer? The example of a woman as virtuous as I am, wouldn't it avail more than all your lessons?

*Doc.*—But, you know that I have several young disciples, who come here to study the humanities; should they see her,

their attention would be distracted from their tasks, and they, perhaps, might prove a pitfall for her.

*Mir.*—What's that? Not to mince matters, then, I am not capable, in your opinion, of making an impression upon the heart of your disciples? Nor do you care what effect they have on mine. The Doctor Pantalogue is a fine husband, indeed. Let his disciples cajole his wife, let his wife flirt with his disciples; what cares he, provided he can make sure of the beautiful female scholar! I know not what restrains me; I ought to bill and coo with your whole academy to get square; you deserve it.

*Doc.*—What a grand idea of revenge! You'd doubtless bill and too marvellously, and I—but it strikes me your virtues offer you charming counsel!

*Mir.*—Fie! shame on you—in your old age,—the Doctor Pantalogue, Director of the Academy of Padua, has mistresses in town! I should very much like to see you with your Lucinda, to see your eyes, worn hollow by a lot of trashy old books, beam tenderly on her. And your voice, grown harsh in schools, does it tinkle mellowly with a tender jargon? How does your mouth, open so wide at times to pronounce the big words of your philosophers, pucker down to the word love? Do you gently stroke your gray beard with the white hand of your beautiful scholar? Do you point with magisterial finger to the necessity of her falling in love with you, or do you adopt the indifferent but giddy air of the presumptuous young dude? Do you dance or warble for her? Perhaps you whistle; how pleasant to see your face, so wrinkled already, when puckered for whistling.

*Doc.*—(Aside.) There's Celio coming. Ah! I must be careful that he, one of love's favorites, does not become acquainted with Lucinda. (To Mirto.) Let's drop the subject, madam.

*Mir.*—No, sir; I want your dear, your favorite scholar Celio to know——

*Doc.*—Wife, I beg you——

Enter Celio and Harlequin.

*Mirto.*—Oh, he'll learn——

*Doctor.*—Do me the kindness——

*Mir.*—It's quite useless.

*Celio.*—What seems to be the trouble between you two?

*Mir.*—(To Celio.) Would you believe——

*Doc.*—Forbear, Mirto——

*Mir.*—You fear he'll discover your treasure, don't you? And I feel that it's to my interest that he should both discover and take her away.

*Harlequin.*—The husband interrupts the wife, the wife the husband; that's a fair picture of the households of to-day, harum-scarum, everything going at sixes and sevens.

*Mir.*—(Rudely pulling Celio toward her.) Would you ever have thought that Doctor Pantalogue——

*Doc.*—(Pulling Celio toward himself.) Don't listen to her fairy tales; jealously darkens her brain. (Mirto and the doctor both speak at once, each tugging at Celio.)

*Mir.*—Doctor Pantalogue——

*Doc.*—With this philosophy——

*Mir.*—Has a young girl——

*Doc.*—That I have embraced——

*Mir.*—Very pretty, that every day——

*Doc.*—And these lessons——

*Mir.*—He goes to see——

*Doc.*—That I give in the academy——

*Cel.*—(Breaking loose.) What nonsense; heavens! have you made a compact to tear me apart?

*Har.*—This is a masterpiece: the Doctor Pantalogue has embraced a very pretty young girl in the academy; now, I'm not as great a philosopher as he, but I really think I could have done as much myself; it doesn't need many lessons nor much of an academy for that.

*Cel.*—Harlequin's head's level.

*Mir.*—(Again drawing Celio toward her.) But you don't seem to understand me; it's——

*Doc.*—(Drawing Celio toward himself.) He does well not to listen to you.

*Har.*—(Drawing the doctor to the back of the stage.) For



heaven's sake, don't both speak at once, all the time. Honor the fair sex, sir; you can speak afterward.

*Mir.*—(To Celio. Harlequin wrestles with the Doctor to prevent him interrupting her.) I want you to know that my rascally husband is unfaithful to me in favor of a young French woman, an orphan, who lodges over there. (She points to the astrologer's house.) He's desperately in love, and for her has sacrificed books, friends, disciples and his wife. I put myself last, having always been last in his thought.

*Cel.*—(Laughing.) Is she pretty?

*Mir.*—Pretty as a picture, charming. There's the house; come around to-morrow, I want you to see her and to make her love you, so that you can supplant my traitor. Good-bye, Pantalogue, I feel quite tranquil now.

*Doc.*—(Pulling loose from Harlequin.) That's fine employment for you, my wife!

*Har.*—(Running after Mirto, who is leaving.) You must not encroach, madam, if you please, upon my particular duty, that of procuring for my master the acquaintance of charming women. (Coming toward the front of the stage.) O Pantalogue, Pantalogue! your name little befits love!

*Cel.*—So this is the way you impose upon us, is it? Under this austere exterior, this humble habit, you conceal a tender heart.

*Doc.*—You credit my wife's fairy tales?

*Har.*—Love is a little libertine who is at home everywhere; he merely gambols about in a cottage, but becomes a serious, settled guest in these old ruined chateaux.

*Cel.*—My dear master, I do not blame you in the least for falling in love. Passion for passion, love throws philosophy in the shade; but the object of your tender care, is she really so beautiful as Mirto says?

*Doc.*—Of what consequence is her beauty to me? What connection can there be between this perishable quality and my heart, defended by the buttresses of philosophy?

*Har.*—(Jumping, with his feet joined.) Oh! the buttresses of philosophy; why, love could jump them like this without half trying.

*Cel.*—You cannot persuade me that you can see and talk, whole hours at a time, to a pretty girl without her making an impression on your heart. When her beautiful eyes regard you attentively, when her mouth graciously opens to answer, I feel sure that your mind is not fixed on those great lines that encircle the sky.

*Doc.*—They are, however, the ordinary subject of our discourse.

*Har.*—You may be talking of all those fine things, but your mind is elsewhere, just as while I eat, I often talk of great affairs of state, but my true attention is invariably fixed on the food and drink served.

*Doc.*—The noble comparison of a veritable glutton!

*Cel.*—The comparison is homely, but, I think, just. Your mouth pronounces, it is true, the great vague words of philosophy, but your mind, unconsciously, perhaps, roguishly trifles with the smiles and graces of your lovely scholar; your eyes inform your heart to desire; your heart deceives your imagination and fills it with a fire you falsely attribute to zeal for philosophy. I am extremely desirous of becoming acquainted with this pretty creature—won't you present me?

*Doc.*—Certainly not.

*Cel.*—(Low, to Harlequin.) Harlequin, you must find some method to satisfy my curiosity. (To the doctor.) You do not wish me to see her—you are jealous. (Embracing him.) But love, love, my dear master; nothing is sweeter. Is it not more natural to be disturbed by two bright eyes turned favorably on us or on our rival than whether the earth turns round the sun or this brilliant orb round the earth. What matters it when a comet or eclipse arrives? It is the absence of the loved one that alarms us. Why such fatigue to learn how it happens that the magnet attracts steel? The secret to attract hearts should be the sole object of our study. But I tire of preaching. If you will deign to follow me, my dear master, to the girl's house where I am going, I will endeavor to teach by example. (Low, to Harlequin.) Remember, you must think out some plan to introduce me to the young lady.

*Doc.*—A fine proposition to make a fellow of the university share with a dude and a coquette!

*Har.*—We've no need of a third party in the matter we wish to bring about; and now to work to set you entirely aside, O Pantalogue, O Pantalogue. (Celio and Harlequin leave.)

*Doc.*—(Alone, soliloquizing.) I must not let Lucinda become acquainted with so good-looking a youth as Celio. The sight of him in an instant would choke all the seeds of philosophy that I have sown in her young breast. I received her in my arms when she was barely born, and, having had her raised in the house of that old maid, the astrologer, she has never seen any man but me. Should Celio see her, his first admiring glance would make her suspect the existence of charms which strike and enchain; she would question these charms and unceasingly recall Celio to her mind's eye; probably she would endeavor to increase them by extraneous ornament, and this care would soon become of more import to her than the cultivation of her mind and soul. Like many another woman, soon, too, would she say: I wish only a mirror to reflect my beauty and a true love to feel my charms; to the curious I abandon all the rest of the universe. (He hears a key creaking in a lock and turns around.) But someone is opening the garden gate of the astrologer's house—the gate that I particularly forbade to be opened. Just heaven! I believe it is herself—Lucinda, where are you going?

Enter Lucinda, in a deep reverie; startled by the doctor's words, she looks up surprised.

*Lucinda.*—Where am I going? I'm sure I don't know—how should I? But, are you the only man in the world? For I see only you when now, for the first time, I get out of that inclosure where I have been kept so long.

*Doctor.*—(Aside.) What a question! How bothersome! (To Lucinda, who has again fallen into a deep reverie.) You are deep in thought, Lucinda; truly, most auspicious for our dear philosophy.

*Luc.*—(Somewhat vexed.) Philosophy has no share in my present thoughts. Since early morn two birds on one branch have been constantly together. They nestled side by side, then the trill of one responded to the carol of the other, and

even the silence that followed expressed a tender solicitude. I frankly admit that their song, their actions and that oblivion to the rest of nature which the pleasure of being together caused, made me thrill with an emotion—a confusion of ideas. Ah, but they are happy!

*Doc.*—These flowers which deck your hair are doubtless due to the charming commentary your fancy has supplied on the birds' happiness.

*Luc.*—The sweet reverie into which their tender union plunged me led my steps to a quiet pool in that brook which babbles at the foot of the garden; there I saw my features and gathered these flowers which I presented to myself, nor could I help but fancy that had they been offered by someone else it would have been in terms so charming that I must have felt touched by the tender attention.

*Doc.*—(Aside.) Nature, O Nature! I fear, in spite of all my efforts, you conquer! (To Lucinda.) And what attentions would you have paid you?

*Luc.*—Well—I can imagine better than I can define: a marked preference to be with me rather than another; a certain eagerness to find occasions to speak with me—some-what timidly, of course—and this young man—

*Doc.*—(Brusquely breaking in.) What, this young man? And why, if you please, a young man rather than a young woman?

*Luc.*—Ah, you ask surprising questions—why this young man? Because in my own sex, you know it quite as well as I, I would find only rivals to my beauty, while the opposite is made to appreciate.

*Doc.*—I can no longer doubt. You wish to kindle in the hearts of men a consuming fire that often leads to the greatest crime. You are lost to shame, I abandon you.

*Luc.*—Don't get angry. It is not in you at all that I wish to inspire love; to you I give the entire disposal of my mind, continue to enrich it with the fruits of knowledge; but I have a heart, also, which, like the mind, has its curiosity, keen, pressing and even more interesting. I think—I need someone to enlighten it: at evening you shall minister to my mind and—

*Doc.*—(Nettled.) I understand, this “someone” every morning shall minister to your heart. Have you already sought out this new, this morning master?

*Luc.*—(In a discreet tone.) Oh, no; in fact, it would not be proper, I think, for me to do that; on the contrary, I should appear at first unwilling to listen, but—little by little—

*Doc.*—And this is how you have profited by my philosophical discourse? You might have been a rational woman if—

*Luc.*—In my opinion, an amiable woman is of more credit to her sex.

*Doc.*—I should have made you an example to women.

*Luc.*—I would rather amuse myself by imitating others than to weary myself with the desire to be an example; one, moreover, that none would follow.

*Doc.*—Your heart would have been immovable to the attacks of passion—

*Luc.*—Oh! to be happy, it seems to me, some passion is necessary. Do you think me yet so much a child that I do not realize my chief source of ennui is the indifference I feel to all that surrounds me; confined always to the same objects, with little pleasure or aversion, I have seen only you, the old maid astrologer, Urgantia, and the trees, flowers and brook of the garden. Yet the brook talks to me at times, and the birds have said, this morning: we are made one for the other, to mutually inspire each other; I shall please and be pleased, shall attract and be attracted; I shall have desires which will please for the moment even if they prove deceptive in the end.

*Doc.*—(Aside.) Each word she pronounces increases my pain. (Aloud.) Leave me.

*Luc.*—Very well, I shall go to find my birds; they will not scold me.

*Doc.*—(Scornfully.) Put them in a cage, then you will have them always near you.

*Luc.*—No, indeed I shall not, the charming little birds! Compelled by cruel restraint to remain together, I fear they might lose the enjoyment they now feel in each other’s society. I know how cruel it is to be deprived of liberty. (She leaves.)

*Doc.*—(Alone.) You have, indeed, deceived yourself, Pantalogue; you thought there was nothing dangerous for a young beauty save intercourse with men, but two birds and a brook have developed in Lucinda all the weakness of her sex—weakness that I had flattered myself I had destroyed by philosophy. Pantalogue, you have deluded yourself well, and here she is, with a mind entirely occupied with a desire to please and to love. What disgust she shows for solitude, and, alas! for philosophy; what indifference to a master who loves her as if she were his own and only child. Ah! cursed birds! cursed brook!

Enter Urgantia

*Urgantia.*—What's the trouble, Doctor Pantalogue? You appear very much affected.

*Doctor.*—Alas! learned Urgantia, I am disheartened; would you believe that in spite of the pains I have taken to root out the womanly weakness in Lucinda, all my precepts of wisdom have become quite useless. Her mind is fixed on love, her heart, filled with desire, awaits only an object to fasten upon.

*Urg.*—An enlightened philosopher like yourself should not have thought, for an instant, that he could conquer nature, or turn a young woman from a desire to please, inspired by self-love. From this desire to please there soon comes the idea of a lover, while to her lively imagination the entire universe suggests love. The butterfly which flutters about a flower, leaving and returning many times, pictures to her mind the anxious lover who cannot leave his sweet one. The earth is adorned in springtime and summer with flowers, in consequence of the kiss of the sun, while the fruit it bears in autumn is born of the union with this brilliant orb; and winter itself is but a perfect symbol of the harsh rigor felt in the absence of the beloved. The studious philosopher admires the omnipotence of the Creator, but the tender girl the power of the created to love.

*Doc.*—Yes, but as Lucinda has, at most, only a theoretical knowledge of this power, I shall surely be able to keep her from its practice. Can it be possible that a callow youth in a quarter of an hour's conversation can destroy a philosophical



education that a philosopher like myself has inculcated during ten years?

*Urg.*—Ah! but the art and science that this callow youth would teach is much easier to learn than philosophy.

*Doc.*—But you must watch more carefully than ever, Urgantia; and it strikes me it would be an excellent idea, to keep Lucinda from the eyes of the inquisitive and from their schemes, for you to pass as her and to respond in her name to any compliments addressed to her. (*Aside.*) If I can get them to believe that this is Lucinda, when they have once seen her they will not ask to return.

*Urg.*—(*Conceitedly.*) You think, then, that I shall be taken for this young girl?

*Doc.*—We alone know her. My wife, even, who speaks of Lucinda so often, has never seen her, and her fame for beauty is due entirely to my wife's jealousy.

*Urg.*—I will do all in my power to help you.

*Doc.*—But night is near at hand, good-bye. Remember, I rely on you. It is time I returned to the academy. (*He leaves.*)

*Urg.*—(*Alone.*) The Doctor Pantalogue, if I am not mistaken, is himself smitten with the tender passion he condemns in his pupil: all his philosophy could not save him. As for myself, susceptible like others to the flame of love, I am naturally inclined to excuse the tender weakness. Sometimes, when occupied with watching the course of star and planet, my heart would bring me back to earth. Women are better suited to sentiment than to science. However, I pardon Pantalogue less than Lucinda——

Enter Celio and Harlequin.

*Celio.*—I think I heard you, madam, pronounce the name of Lucinda. I have just arrived from France, where both she and I were born; her relatives have charged me to see her, and if by your kindness I can tell her the thousand or more things I have to relate I shall be deeply obliged to you.

*Harlequin.*—His trip has browned him up somewhat, but his complexion will clear little by little.



*Urgantia.*—It will be easy to execute your commission; you see Lucinda before you. (Celio and Harlequin look around for Lucinda, but, finding no one, return and face Urgantia.)

*Cel.*—Where the deuce is she?

*Urg.*—I am she, I tell you.

*Cel.*—What, it's you, you the pupil of Doctor Pantalogue?

*Har.*—It's you he sweats over to make sage?

*Urg.*—Myself; but why this surprise?

*Har.*—But—I am surprised at his superfluous pains; what does he fear? Oh! I'll pledge myself you're sage, very sage, one couldn't be sager; you have the air of the whole seven sages of Greece.

*Cel.*—(Aside.) Heavens, but she's homely!

*Urg.*—(Aside, regarding Celio.) What a handsome fellow!

*Har.*—(To Celio.) She regards you favorably, sir; I will retire, you can chat with her more at your ease when alone.

*Cel.*—Where are you going?

*Har.*—(To Celio.) Go closer to her, sir; here's a chance to sow your wild oats; an opportunity such as this does not often occur, sir.

*Urg.*—(Sweetly, with the air of a person seeking to please.) You said, just now, you had a thousand things to entertain me with, and yet you say nothing.

*Cel.*—(Embarrassed.) Madam, pardon me, I did not expect to find Lucinda so quickly, and I find myself so confused and embarrassed that I can hardly recall— (Low, to Harlequin.) Speak for me, you rascal.

*Har.*—(To Celio.) By Jove! such a face don't recall any more to me than it does to you; I can tell her, however, if you like, that you love her.

*Cel.*—(Stopping him.) Not that, for heaven's sake! (To Urgantia.) Excuse us, madam, we'll return to-morrow. (He wishes to leave.)

*Urg.*—(Aside, regarding Celio.) I must retain him; what a fascinating fellow he is! (To Celio, whom she recalls.) I, perhaps, can fancy what causes your surprise; you have heard me highly spoken of, and these eulogies have led you to be-

lieve me different in appearance; but, pardon my saying, that this is not my sole charm. I owe my reputation and the friendship of Doctor Pantalogue to a science infinitely more weighty than mere beauty. I have almost no intercourse with any save the gods; the sky is my country, the stars are my mirrors and my books; I am the confidant of destiny; the future is as present to my eye as the past; I know all that must happen to men; I can announce war or peace, and I see at a glance the rise and fall of empires.

*Har.*—(To Celio.) Ah! sir, that's a lady-love worth having! She must be a gypsy. By Jove! if we haven't struck good fortune in love, we can at least have our fortunes told. (To Urgantia.) Do you chance to know the Seigneur Celio? He's an intimate friend of my master; can you tell us where he is at present?

*Urg.*—I have never seen him, but at the request of Doctor Pantalogue, who gave me the hour of his birth, I have cast his horoscope. I know all that he does, all that he says and everything that he thinks, just as he does himself.

*Cel.*—(Aside.) She piques my curiosity. (Aloud.) Will you do me the kindness to tell me what he is doing at this moment?

*Urg.*—(Tenderly.) Your physiognomy pleases me. I could refuse you nothing, sir; but you must at least promise to be discreet. (She draws a tablet from her pocket and traces upon it various mysterious signs.) The Seigneur Celio is keeping an appointment with a pretty woman who loves him and whom he loves very much.

*Cel.*—(Laughing.) Whom he loves very much?

*Har.*—(Laughing.) A pretty woman?

*Urg.*—Very pretty. She is a blonde who has all the piquancy usually found only in brunettes.

*Har.*—(Looking laughingly at his master and slyly pointing to Urgantia.) The charming blonde!

*Urg.*—If you could see, as I see, the passionate glances he throws upon her!

*Har.*—Oh! I see them, I see them.

*Urg.*—The eagerness of her lover causes in this beauty an emotion which paints her cheeks a lovely carnation.

*Cel.*—(Aside.) I can't stand this any longer. (To *Urgantia*.) I must go to congratulate Celio upon his great good fortune. (He leaves.)

*Har.*—(Aside.) Astrologers, it seems, often deceive themselves; still, they must hit it sometimes, otherwise people would not be so infatuated with them; perhaps she can give me some better pointers than she gave my master. (To *Urgantia*.) Here's my hand, what do the stars think of a fellow like me?

*Urg.*—(Aside.) I must learn of this booby the name of that charming Frenchman who has made such an impression on my heart. (To *Harlequin*, sighing.) I cannot tell your fate until I know the name of your master.

*Har.*—And why, if you please?

*Urg.*—Why? Well, you know the star of the master has an influence upon the destiny of the valet, and there's truth in the proverb: "Like master, like servant."

*Har.*—You ought to know—suppose I serve the Seigneur Celio?

*Urg.*—(Aside.) Celio? Celio? Why, that must be he disguised as the Frenchman. I'll win the favor of this servant in my interest. (She pronounces some long, mysterious words while holding and looking at the hand of *Harlequin*; he withdraws it tremblingly.)

*Har.*—What the deuce are you muttering? You make me feel queer.

*Urg.*—(Again taking his hand.) You were born under a most happy constellation, for rapid fortune.

*Har.*—And that is?

*Urg.*—The one dominated by the planet Mercury.

*Har.*—So? My master has often obliged me to do honor to my planet.

*Urg.*—(Aside.) I'll flatter him with fine promises. (To *Harlequin*, looking at the lines in his hand.) Your cellar will be filled to overflowing with exquisite wines, your table will groan with delicious foods.

*Har.*—(Jumps with joy.) Good! good! fine eating and drinking! I'm well satisfied with the stars; but look, look sharp at this other hand and see if you cannot find a young and pretty girl, one made expressly for me, there, you understand—

*Urg.*—(Taking his other hand.) Yes, I see her—but—

*Har.*—What?

*Urg.*—These blessings cannot be bestowed upon you, unless Celio loves me.

*Har.*—(Surprised.) Unless Celio loves you? (Half crying.) Good-bye, blessings! (Aside.) My master will certainly never love that witch.

*Urg.*—But, by frequently talking of me, you can probably incline him to—

*Har.*—(Aside.) Kick me all over the place.

*Urg.*—Return my tenderness.

*Har.*—The stars, I understand, don't always keep their promises in full; can't you arrange to get me an instalment on the blessing account in advance—a sort of earnest of the stars' good intentions toward me?

*Urg.*—Nothing easier, sir; wait, I'll be back in a moment or two. (She leaves.)

*Har.*—(Alone.) If the stars do well by me in advance, I'll yield myself completely to them, and my master will have to love this Lucinda or tell me the reason why. It's true, the first glance at her is not very appetizing, but he'll get used, little by little, to her peculiar style of beauty; why, I'm sure I already find her less homely, since she has promised me these blessings. Besides, is it fair that only beauty should be loved? It strikes me the stars make me wait considerably. but I suppose it's quite a trip between the stars and the earth.

Enter Urgantia.

*Urg.*—Take this, my faithful fellow, this money and this wine as a pledge of things promised. Give this note to your master, and if I receive a favorable answer, you can count upon fortune smiling on you.

*Har.*—For a gypsy, I certainly find you an honest woman; I shall take great pleasure in immediately drinking to your good health.

*Urg.*—Do not tarry; deliver my note at once and quickly bring me back an answer; I shall return here to get it. (She leaves.)

*Har.*—(Alone, drinking.) There's a taste about this wine of the stars that I like. (He drinks.) At least, he won't hate you, nor do I think he will be entirely indifferent to you. (He drinks.) In fact, he'll rather like you, or, perhaps, I'd better say, he'll love you. (He drinks.) Yes, he'll fairly worship you; never in his life has my master loved so passionately as he now loves you.

Enter Lucinda, unseen by Harlequin.

*Harlequin.*—(Holding in his hand and looking at the money Urgantia gave him.) Charming astrologer, who could resist so many attractions! (He counts his money.)

*Lucinda.*—(Aside.) I saw the young man who asked to see me; how handsome he is! I heard, too, all his conversation with Urgantia; how base she is! Not satisfied with hiding me from the world, she now wishes an indiscreet and homely woman to pose as me. I must try to block her scheme and turn it to my own advantage.

*Har.*—(Perceiving Lucinda.) What a pretty girl! (Approaching her.) Would you kindly permit me, my pretty damsel, to ask if you are the young beauty that the stars and Lucinda have just promised me?

*Luc.*—I, myself, am Lucinda.

*Har.*—(Retreating and trembling.) You are Lucinda? There's some devilish witchcraft here. You can change, in a moment, your face and whole appearance? And what a change! My, but you're clever! A lady's maid with your talents could make millions.

*Luc.*—(Aside.) Without entirely undeceiving him, I'll use him for my purpose.

*Har.*—(Somewhat reassured.) What pleasure do you find

in being homely? You look a hundred times better now, and I'm not surprised that the doctor's wife is jealous of you.

*Luc.*—What! a woman is jealous of me? How flattering! I knew the brook spoke truth to me this morning.

*Har.*—(Aside.) Her amiability makes me bold. I wonder if the wine she gave me was dyed like her cheeks are? But what do I care; it was good, and I doubt not that my master would be quite reconciled to her at present, even if her complexion is artificial. (He embraces her.) Oh! it's only to see if the colors will wash! (He continues to caress and she to repulse him.) Now, I'm doing this strictly for your benefit, so you can get accustomed to my master's ways.

*Luc.*—Stop it, I tell you, you insolent fellow,

*Har.*—That's the way in this world! When you were homely you were willing enough to be embraced, but now you're beautiful you wish to shy off and put on airs; but Celio left you brusquely enough.

*Luc.*—I owe him thanks for not taking kindly to Lucinda, in that disagreeable disguise. I wish him to see her in the future in no form other than the one in which I now appear; nor can I pardon you for having promised the homely one to make him love her. Your master is under little obligations to you for that.

*Har.*—Let him see you as you are now, I warrant he'll love you hard enough. I'll go and seek him, but for heaven's sake don't change yourself meanwhile. (He leaves, but returns shortly afterward, in deep thought.)

*Luc.*—(Aside.) I'll revenge myself on Urgantia, my treacherous rival; quit an old philosopher for a young husband and drop philosophy for sentiment.

*Har.*—Excuse me, but my master will scarcely credit what I say; you help me out; you come with me.

*Luc.*—What an idea! Don't I merit his coming to seek me? However favorable my feelings for your master may be, I should never think of taking such a step.

*Har.*—(Aside.) I notice when she's homely she's not so devilish particular. But, that's the way; the more lovable they are the less they love you.

*Luc.*—No, I cannot go with you; it will be quite enough for you to hint to him my feelings, and then return and tell me what he answers. I shall await you in this garden; you can knock when you get back, but do not keep me waiting long, for I am curious to know how he receives your news. (She enters the garden and closes the door.)

*Har.*—I fear this new acquaintance is going to give me plenty to do.

Enter Celio.

*Harlequin.*—Ah! master, we meet quite apropos, for I have the best of news. In you I see the happiest of men, for Lucinda loves you.

*Celio.*—You joke poorly, Harlequin.

*Har.*—But I'm not joking, sir; Lucinda adores you and it's absolutely necessary that you return her passion; I've pledged my word upon it.

*Cel.*—Well, I don't intend to honor your pledge; I've little liking for the grotesque.

*Har.*—Grotesque, did you say? May the devil take me if she's not the most beautiful person—you'll love her to distraction, I tell you.

*Cel.*—Beautiful? Lucinda? that astrologer I saw awhile ago?

*Har.*—Not that one, the one I saw when you weren't here.

*Cel.*—You saw another and more beautiful Lucinda?

*Har.*—No, I didn't see another Lucinda; I saw the same one, who was homely while you were present, but who became beautiful a moment or two after you left. Here's a note she gave me to hand you.

*Cel.*—(After having read his letter.) And you say a beautiful girl gave you this charming letter for me?

*Har.*—No, she hadn't yet become beautiful when she gave me that letter, but her beauty came shortly afterward, and with it a prudish severity.

*Cel.*—I've no patience with you, Harlequin. First she's beautiful, then she isn't, and again she's beautiful. What nonsense is this, anyway?



*Har.*—Why, it's clear enough; only this astrologer must be something of a witch, for she changed her face and her whole appearance in an instant.

*Cel.*—Changed her face and whole appearance?

*Har.*—Yes; is there anything so astonishing in that? Don't we see women every day with a little paint and powder and human ingenuity transform their faces? And when astrology, magic and witchcraft combine—

*Cel.*—Changed her face and whole appearance. I suspect some deviltry. While Lucinda was homely she gave you this letter, you say; did she speak of me while beautiful?

*Har.*—Oh, yes; she said it pleased her to know you disdained Lucinda when homely, and that she wished you to see her always, in the future, beautiful—that you might feel different toward her.

*Cel.*—That's sufficient; I'll penetrate this mystery. I've been fooled by the doctor's precautions.

*Har.*—(Seeing Urgantia coming.) Ah! master, here she comes; speak to her yourself. I fear, however, she's returned to her original shape. Yes, alas! she's homely again.

*Cel.*—Tell her I adore her, and make an appointment for me somewhere in the flower-garden. (Aside.) I must get rid of this ugly creature, so that I can speak without interruption to the beauty. (He leaves.)

Enter Urgantia.

*Urgantia.*—Well, my dear fellow, did you give him my note and return with an answer?

*Harlequin.*—An answer? Not much. My master takes time by the forelock; he goes straight to the point. He awaits you in the flower-garden, at the lane of sighs, to tell you with his lips more than he could put on paper. But, take my advice, become beautiful; he'll be more likely to content you.

*Urg.*—A rendezvous is the response to my note? (With assumed timidity.) But it seems that a modest girl like I am—

*Har.*—By Jove, if you're going to spring your modesty on

us, you ought not to employ for your love negotiations a man born under the planet Mercury.

*Urg.*—To find myself alone in a garden with a young man at nightfall, this idea is——

*Har.*—A very pleasing one, I'm sure. Now, don't be too kittenish, and, above all, don't forget to change over to that pretty face and figure, for your present features are not at all adapted to a rendezvous.

*Urg.*—(Simpering.) It's true that timidity and modesty make very great changes——

*Har.*—(Leading her toward the garden.) Come, you're losing time; slip into the flower-garden, you'll find someone worth talking to.

*Urg.*—(At the garden gate.) O love! love! to what dangers do you now expose the tender Urgantia? (She leaves.)

Enter Celio, around the side of the house.

*Celio.*—I must clear up this mystery——

*Harlequin.*—(Stopping him.) Where the devil are you going? This isn't the way; go through there. Have I got to lead you around like a child?

*Cel.*—Leave me alone, I wish to——

*Har.*—You wish to get off the track and make her wait for you? She's in there, I say.

*Cel.*—Get out of my way; I feel sure that Lucinda the beauty and the homely Lucinda are two different persons, and I mean to assure myself definitely.

*Har.*—Well, you won't get any assurance here.

Enter Lucinda, after Celio has knocked on Urgantia's door.

*Lucinda.*—(Pretending at first to avoid Celio.) Seigneur, what have you come to find in this peaceful retreat?

*Celio.*—I come to make amends for my error at the expense of my liberty, and to seek a charming person whom I am destined to love all the balance of my life. What fascination you possess! Pray do not turn your face away.

*Harlequin.*—There is another one, thick-headed fool that I was! (Lucinda keeps looking around, as though she feared to be surprised with them.)

*Cel.*—(To Lucinda.) I beg you, do not be disturbed; I have banished your Argus to a pretended rendezvous in the flower-garden, and Harlequin will now go to watch her. (He makes energetic signs to Harlequin to be off.)

*Har.*—Very well, sir; I go to observe my planet. (He leaves.)

*Luc.*—Are there not ladies enough, sir, in this city to occupy you? Must you, in addition, disturb my solitude?

*Cel.*—Ah! I leave them all joyfully. I prefer to all else the pleasure of passing my days in this solitude with you, here to bespeak my love and let my thirsty heart drink at the inexhaustible fountain of your bright eyes.

*Luc.*—(Aside.) Just like my birds! (To Celio.) I can scarce credit this preference; the ladies of the city have too many advantages over me. Unknown to Pantalogue, I have read some books in which these ladies are pictured: they have costumes of rich and rare materials in many hues and colors, while I am dressed most simply; precious jewels adorn their hair, while mine is decked alone with flowers. They have clever maids to aid, and all the resources of the chemist, while the tiny pool of a brook is my only mirror, and its sparkling water my only cosmetic. Attempts upon a thousand hearts have taught these ladies how to please, while I, alas! should I please, could not tell how I did it.

*Cel.*—This innocence of the value of your charms makes them all the more dangerous; the simplicity of your ornaments and manners sets off your radiant beauty. Truly, the conquest of all the greatest beauties in Padua would move me less than to know that I pleased you; and if I were assured you loved me——

*Luc.*—Please me, love and be loved by me. Ah! sir, that would, perhaps, be the greatest misfortune that could happen to me. Love, to the ladies of the world, so Pantalogue has told me, is only a diversion; doubtless to me it would be a serious occupation. My thoughts are not taken up, as theirs, with fashion and the play, gaming and intrigue, which en-

feeble all true sentiment. I cannot give my heart with faint hope of return, for nothing could console me for the loss of my lover. Shut up as I am, my mind and heart would be confined to the object of my love, and should this object prove inconstant, the same solitude that fed my love would increase my sorrow. Ah! those persons over whom Cupid is too masterful should carefully avoid him!

*Cel.*—Always sure of infinite return and a constancy beyond question, should you fear to love too much?

*Luc.*—No, I should not fear to love too much, once I had commenced; then I should be too frank to hide my feelings, but I wish to avoid beginning. However, I had not before noticed we were alone. Pray, leave me, sir; be kind and go at once.

*Cel.*—Do you doubt the respect that must always accompany the love you inspire?

*Luc.*—This love and this respect I fear, sir; but what unusual terms, foreign to this place and to me, I have learned already to pronounce in your presence.

*Cel.*—These are words that flow naturally to the lips; how cruel in the doctor to bury these charms alive; Follow nature's promptings; she has favored you with beauty only that you may enjoy its fruits.

*Luc.*—The morality I have been taught up to this time is quite different. My mind received it with indifference, and there has remained only a light impression, while the thoughts you have expressed are deeply engraved upon my heart—speaking of my heart, I feel embarrassed—I feel so much moved, I hardly know what I am saying—but, sir, the daylight has entirely vanished, I can scarce see; leave me, I beg you. (She starts toward the house.)

Enter the doctor, who stops her.

*Celio.*—(Searching in the obscurity for Lucinda.) You flee to conceal yourself in vain; if my eyes cannot find your hiding-place, my heart will inform me. (Celio continues to search for her.)

*Lucinda.*—(To Pantalogue, whom she believes to be Celio.)

I forbid you to retain me longer. By this resistance to my wish you are destroying the favorable opinion that your words and appearance inspired. Yes, Seigneur, I admit, and the constraint under which you have placed me will excuse this sudden avowal, that I am pleased with the interest you take in me, and I sincerely hope you will be able to find some way to get me out of the clutches of Doctor Pantalogue, Urgantia and the philosophy, which will henceforth be more disgusting than ever to me.

*Doctor.*—(Aside.) What do I hear!

*Cel.*—Where could she have gone?

Enter Urgantia.

*Urgantia.*—(Aside.) I recognize Cello's voice. (Aloud.) He has forgotten the flower-garden.

*Celio.*—(He catches Urgantia, who, he thinks, is Lucinda, and kneels before her.) Do not speak, charming Lucinda, of any woman but yourself. I am already severely punished, for did I not take for you that silly old maid astrologer?

Enter Mirto and Harlequin, with a lighted torch.

*Mirto.*—Great heavens! what do I see?

*Harlequin.*—(Somewhat blinded by the light, to Mirto.) Yes, I can assure you, madam, that you will be most content with the manner my master and I have conducted this enterprise for you.

*Mir.*—(To Harlequin.) Look there, you gallows-bird, and see how your master follows my suggestions and makes Lucinda love him, to supplant my husband. (To Celio.) Fie! sir, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, to so help the intrigues of a married man; but perhaps you fear that this maker of almanacs will be lonesome while my unfaithful husband is caressing. (She points to Lucinda, who is held in the arms of the doctor.)

*Celio.*—(Placing himself by the side of Lucinda.) 'Tis but a mistake due to the night, madam. I beg, no hard words, and caution you to respect a lady with whom I am ready to

unite my destiny, if she thinks the pleasure of loving me preferable to the wearisome tasks of philosophy.

*Doctor.*—(To Celio.) What, you wish to marry her?

*Mir.*—By heavens! it won't be healthy for you to oppose it.

*Doc.*—But, Lucinda, will she be willing to leave the noble exercise of mind and soul afforded by philosophy for the sordid cares and trifling interests of a household?

*Mir.*—It would be much more to your credit to try satisfactorily to fulfill some of the duties you owe your family than to seek to restrain others. What good does your old philosophy do me?

*Lucinda.*—I should not merit the honor Celio wishes to bestow on me were I to hesitate a minute.

*Har.*—You are quite right, Miss, there's nothing like applying one's self to natural philosophy.

*Luc.*—(To the doctor.) Pantalogue, you have instructed both Celio and me, and we hope you will show the same kindness——

*Har.*—To their children.

*Doc.*—Faugh! (He leaves.)

*Har.*—The poor old philosopher, he was choking! (To Urgantia.) And what do the stars think of it?

*Urgantia.*—(She looks at them furiously, then bursts out with prophetic rage.) Audacious lovers and most daring mates, you have raised high heaven against you. Over your hymeneal altar I see the planets, and the celestial signs prefigure their malignant influence. Saturn will soon cast over you his sombre vapors to darken your minds and impede your love, while Mars, happy to increase these gathering clouds, frowns portentously. (To Lucinda.) Lucinda, Aquarius, the minister of destiny, will make your bosom ice for Celio, while fate shall place upon his forehead the sad horns of Capricorn.

*Mir.*—What predictions!

*Har.*—In truth, this is the horoscope of nearly all husbands; and, if all applaud whom the shoe pinches, the house will be shaken by the noise.

As appears from its *Pantologue*, *Harlequin* and other characters, *The Philosopher Duped by Love* was taken, in part, from the Spanish drama. Though presented at the Bourgogne about the same time with Molière's comedies, it differs widely from them in tone, differs both in characterization and manners. In the philosopher and his wife, his male disciple and his female pupil, even in *Urgantia*, the old-maid astrologer, there is much to remind us of the heavy father, the dama, gracioso and other personages of the Spanish drama in its lighter vein. Nor should this detract from the merit of the work; for at the time when it was written the literature of Spain was all-powerful in Europe, so that Molière and Racine, and even Shakespeare, did not scruple to borrow from her writers. Not yet had the French stage reached the summit of its glory, and the company which Molière founded must compete with foreign players and playwrights for the suffrages of audiences, then all too few and scant to reward the productions of genius.

















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